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# Self-Made Man's Wife



Charles Eustace Merriman

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The Self-Made Man's Wife.

# A Self-Made Man's Wife

Her Letters to Her Son

Being the Woman's View of Certain Famous  
Correspondence

By

Charles Eustace Merriman

Author of "Letters from a Son to His Self-Made Father"

Illustrated by F. T. Richards

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G. P. Putnam's Sons

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**The Knickerbocker Press, New York**

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To the  
Inconspicuous Wives  
of  
Conspicuous Men

This Book is  
Sympathetically Dedicated



That all the virtue of success does not lie with a self-made man ; but that the wisdom, the frugality, the sacrifices of a heaven-made woman often build with him the structure of happiness and prosperity, it is the intent of this volume to emphasize.

How, in one case, this was done—with certain humorous happenings by the way—these pages reveal.



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## • THE FIRST LETTER

*The Self-Made Man's Wife has Perused  
Some of Her Husband's Philosophic  
Epistles to Her Son, to Whom She now  
Writes, and Who has just Started  
on His Honeymoon.*



CHICAGO, January 5, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

If you do not fancy long letters I fear you may have reason to regret that, when packing for your wedding journey, you tossed me a packet of your father's epistles with the remark, "There's rainy-day reading, mother." The weather has been quite pleasant, but I have read many of them. I have your replies, too. I told your father you had given me his letters and he chuckled.

"Has he?" he said. "Well then, you'd better have the young cub's answers."

So he gave them to me. I've laughed over them and maybe cried a bit, too. You never wrote *me* such long letters. Perhaps it was because mine were so short. That was because I didn't want to trouble you and detain you from studies or business. It occurs to me that I may

## 4      Letters from the Wife of

have been over-considerate. Just now I miss you more than ever before. I think Helen, being a woman, would know why. Therefore, in hope of return in kind, I may surprise you by my energy as a correspondent.

It is natural to me. As you know, I was a school-teacher in my youth and writing comes easy. Your father's first experience as a ready letter-writer was during our courtship. My sisters used to jest over his letters—"serials" they called them. They never knew that it was my example that spurred him on.

He was not much of a philosopher in those days, though. What lover is? But a man who can stick to the pork-packing business for forty years must become a philosopher—or an idiot. His advice to you, sugar-coated by a wit I confess I scarcely credited him with, has doubtless been of great value to you in your success in life. Possibly some would think that the philosophic regimen that he furnished might have proved cloying rather than nutritious. Perhaps, however, you es-

caped this danger by a wise policy of selection and rejection.

In this connection an experience of our friend Dr. Maynard occurs to me. As you know, he is ever on the watch for effects from causes as they concern his pet hobby, the digestion. One evening at dinner he was discussing the effect of cereal foods upon the system and turned to your father.

"And you, John," he said, "how do cereals affect you? Do you gain weight on them?"

"No," replied your father.

"Do you get thinner?" he asked.

"No, I don't," said your father.

"I see. Cereals keep you at the same weight," announced the doctor with a triumphant glance about the table, as if he had established some important theory.

"No, they don't," again answered your father, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Dear me," protested Dr. Maynard. "Really, John, you test credulity too far. It is obvious that cereals must have some effect on you."

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"I assure you they do not," insisted your father.

"But, my dear fellow, how can that possibly be?" cried the doctor.

"Simple enough," said your father. "I don't eat cereals."

Perhaps, however, this is not applicable to his philosophy and yourself. Still I recall that as a little boy you were not always as impressionable on some sides as I sometimes wished you were. I remember that I once showed you an engraving representing a band of early Christian martyrs exposed to the fury of wild beasts in a Roman arena in the time of Nero. I told the story of the atrocity in language that I thought best fitted to your childish ears, and you drank in my words eagerly.

You stared at the picture as if fascinated. Then you raised your dilated eyes to mine.

"Look, mamma," you said, and I glanced at the portion of the picture upon which the tip of your chubby forefinger rested, prepared to sympathize with your words of pity and horror.

“Look, mamma,” you went on, “there’s a poor little lion in the corner that won’t det any early Christian.”

Though childish instincts are not to be too much relied upon as indicating character, still the child is the father of the man, as your father often says. But you long ago passed the time when you had to begin to think for yourself, and “a word to the wise is sufficient,” although it would n’t be if there were more wise people in the world. As boys go you were a good boy. Possibly a boy cannot be too good, although I have seen some whose exterior aroused suspicion. My dearest school friend, Nelly Noble,—Mrs. Job Anstruther that is,—has pronounced ideas on the subject of male probity.

“Job smokes and swears and takes an occasional drink,” she said to me one day early in her married life, “and I know it. If he did n’t I should lie awake nights worrying as to the particular brand of bad habit he might acquire.”

My observation of children in general, as school-teacher and—well, since—has



## 8      Letters from the Wife of

taught me that the best way to get the wood split is to warn a boy not to touch the axe. I was never fearful about your success in life after I overheard a conversation between you and a playmate one day when you were about six years old. You and little Phil Gardner were sitting in a swing at his home, where I had taken you on a call upon his mother. Mrs. Gardner and I were sitting on the veranda watching you when suddenly your voice piped up :

“ Philip,” you said.

“ What ? ” he asked.

“ This is a pretty narrow seat, is n't it ? ”

“ Yes,” answered Philip.

“ Well,” you continued, “ don't you think if one of us got out there'd be more room for me ? ”

Philip got down, and from that moment I had no doubt of your entire fitness to succeed to your father's place as a financier. I wish your father thought the same, but he has held the reins so long that I suppose that he'd feel he had lost his grip on life if he relinquished them to

another. The worst feature about money-making is that after a man has worked himself almost to death to get it, he feels that he must work twice as hard to keep people from getting it away from him. Believe me, however, it is fortunate for you that your father has given you so much education as to the value of money by keeping it away from you. There is only one better way to learn its value, and that is trying to borrow some when you need it badly.

I quote this from your father, who, so far as I have read his letters, appears not to have imparted this particular thought to you. It occurred to him with special force when he was caught in the pork "corner" (the year you were eight) and was prompted by your Uncle Henry's flat refusal to lend him half a million.

"I told John," said your uncle in speaking of it to me afterwards, "that a man who took advantage of every occasion of a quiet poker game or a horse trot to orate against the evils of gambling and then was squeezed in a bull market, had

no use for my money. Philosophers who live in brokers' offices with big glass fronts," he concluded, "had better not throw axiomatic bricks at me."

I don't think your father cares very much for your Uncle Henry. I do not know whether you ever heard the story he used to tell of him in his younger days, neither do I vouch for its accuracy. Your father claims that when his brother courted your Aunt Jane he was about the greenest piece of homespun Missouri ever produced, and that the green had not worn off when they were married. Jane insisted on a church wedding, and your father declares that when the officiating clergyman asked: "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" your uncle grinned sheepishly and stammered out: "Well, Mister, that's what I come here for."

I fear this letter has quite outrun your patience and I must leave unsaid almost all that I meant to say, for when I began I intended to write on quite different topics. I know you will bear with me,



**“The greenest piece of homespun Missouri  
ever produced.”**



for you will remember that this is my *première* in your father's familiar rôle of extended letter-writer to you. I must not forget, however, to add a line to impress upon you to be careful about your flannels and change with the weather. Good wife as she may be, Helen cannot be expected to sense your peculiar temperament by instinct, and you know you were always careless about your health. Still I have great confidence in Helen and like her. Indeed I may say that I love her quite as dearly as any mother ever loves her only son's newly made wife.

Yet I do not wish to lose my share of first place in your heart, to which—a bit grudgingly perhaps—I admitted Helen when I was forced to acknowledge her to myself as my future daughter-in-law. Next to a good mother—possibly equal with her—a man needs a good wife. That I believe Helen to be such a wife was proven when I took her in my arms the night you told me of your engagement. Had I thought otherwise—but some things are best left to the imagination.

I am not, and never have been, the least bit jealous of Helen. Perhaps I have not always been ready to admit that she was quite good enough for you, but a mother usually wants an angel for her son's wife, and an angel could scarcely be expected to wear tailor-made dresses. It's a poor son who has n't room enough in his heart for both his mother and his wife. Whether he has room enough for both in his *house* depends, first, upon the size of the house, secondly, upon the wife, and, lastly, and more especially, upon the mother.

No mother who has not reached the state of sainthood (and when she *has* reached it, all possibility of misunderstanding is at an end) likes to see another woman in her place at the family table. If she is a fixture in the household and invariably conceals the fact that she realizes that her nose is out of joint, she is an adept at dissimulation. If she does n't conceal it she is likely to be a martyr, or make one out of her daughter-in-law, which is bad, or out of her son, which is worse.

As I glance over these lines, it occurs to me that you may think I have taken a leaf from the book of your father. It would be strange if, after so many years of life with him, I had not caught something of his peculiarities. Had it not been that you happened to leave me his letters for a leisure hour, I should never have imagined that those peculiarities had a literary trend. I have evidently deceived myself and, in a mistaken sense of loyalty to your father, have deprived myself needlessly of the consolation of literary pursuits. I will confess that in my school-teaching days I even wrote poetry. Subsequent associations robbed me of such aspirations. What rhyme or rhythm could poetize "hog"?

Now, my dear boy, if you do not answer soon and at length I shall know that my letter has failed to excite the appreciation you have evidently felt for your father's correspondence.

With much love,

Ever your

MOTHER.



## 14 Self-Made Man's Wife's Letters

P. S. Don't forget the flannels and remember me to Helen. And *apropos*, although you will, of course, use your own judgment, perhaps it would be as well if she did not know that I have written you such a long letter. The marital relation is not altogether free from the little doubts and misunderstandings that beset humanity generally, and I should not want Helen to have any reason to imagine that advice from me might be at the bottom of any small protest on your part against the almost inevitable, if trifling, discomfiture of newly imposed bonds of matrimony. This advice is dictated by experience, for my dear mother lived for many years after I married your father.

MOTHER.

. THE SECOND LETTER

*The Mother Points out to Her Boy the Advantages to Well-Intentioned Husbands of Certain Lines of Conduct, and Enforces Her Argument by Some Apt but not at all Sombre Illustrations.*



CHICAGO, January 16, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I can assure you that I was gratified at your prompt reply to my letter. I confess to some fear that you might resent so much advice from me after so many similar epistles from your dear father, for there is a world of truth in the old saw anent the last straw and the camel's back.

Yet advice, in this world, is inevitable. The fact that you seem to have had more than your fair share of it might counsel me to forbear adding to your burden, did I not feel that my adoption of the rôle of advisory letter-writer may serve you as a sort of intellectual antidote, so to speak. While I do not profess to be an infallible mentor of other people's actions, and although I do not believe myself the residuary legatee of all the wisdom of the ages, I feel, nevertheless, that in venturing, at

this late day, to jot down for your eyes some of the passing impressions and deductions of a life spent under what may safely be called peculiar conditions, I am only fulfilling a mother's obligation.

That, hitherto, my advice has been of the variety usually given, literally or metaphorically, "at mother's knee," was because, until I had the opportunity of reading your father's letters and your replies, I should never have imagined that yours was the temperament to receive, when there was opportunity to evade, so much precept and admonition. It seems, however, that it is a wise mother—as well as father—who knows her own child.

I am encouraged in this new line of endeavor for your good by the fact that your father says that he has not written you since you left on your wedding trip, for if ever a man needs counsel it is just after he has taken his life's partner. Later, after the domestic *status quo* has been definitely established, there may be no further need (or, indeed, opportunity) for the advice of a third party. I am also inspired to this

correspondence by my belief that it is quite essential to a well-rounded life that a young man should have some ideals not bound up in the check-book.

In further perusal of your letters to your father I have been glad to observe that, now and then, you have manifested a tendency to look above the chimneys of the packing-house and see God's blue sky beyond the bacon smoke. While the savor of ham is most appetizing, at its appointed time and place (at least at the breakfast-table of those not affiliated with the packing industry), I submit that some of us, at least, have an appetite, both physical and mental, for other things.

I know that this is true of you, for I, at least, have noted in your letters, as well as in your casual conversation, evidences of a poetic nature, an æsthetic love of ease, and an aspiration for the infinite that are much to your credit. You cannot cultivate these qualities too earnestly, for the atmosphere of the business to which I fear you are doomed will never permit your soul to soar too far into the empyrean.

Therefore do not construe what I have said, or what I may say, as always directed towards you. One should never assume unpleasant suggestions as personal in their application. If he does, he will have an unhappy life, unless he happens to be as thick-skinned and philosophic as was a wealthy merchant who is one of the figures in a story your father tells.

This merchant's unusually large family included a youngest daughter, to whom court was being paid by a young professor of moral philosophy. The professor's only sin was poverty, so the daughter conceived the idea that paternal opposition might be averted if the father should hear the young professor in a lecture course in which he was one of the speakers. She took an elder brother into her confidence and together they succeeded in persuading their father and mother to accompany them to the lecture.

To the consternation of the young plotters, the professor—who was ignorant of their presence—took, as his subject,

"The ethics of business and every-day life," and entered into a scathing denunciation of certain common commercial and household practices when judged by the highest moral standards. The father listened with apparent interest but made no comment on the way home.

Brother and sister consulted that night. Next day the brother sought out his father, and began his intended elaborate explanation in behalf of the professor with a floundering introduction to the effect that he was afraid his father would think the family insulted by the lecture.

"Oh, don't bother about it, my boy," interrupted his father. "In such a large family as ours, it would have been a pretty poor lecture on morals if it had n't hit some one of us. I would n't take offence if I were you."

It appears highly improbable, my son, that you are supersensitive. Your patience as a correspondent proves that. Yet too great freedom from sensitiveness is a misfortune, especially in the marital relation. Unless, as I deeply regret



often happens, their finer feelings become blunted by association, women are extremely impressionable. This often creates a barrier between husband and wife early in marriage. Many husbands are fond of saying that "women are enigmas!" That is because they do not understand their wives. No woman is an enigma to a man who is intelligent and who begins right. A good wife is pure crystal, and the man who cannot see through her has moral strabismus. One who is very near and dear to us both needed glasses very early, but declined to wear them.

A wife's ideas and ideals may be quite different from her husband's without her being beneath consideration. In fact, it is very often the case that a woman who is thought by her husband not to be his equal, is n't; only, unfortunately for his discernment, she is above, not beneath him.

All depends upon the viewpoint, as Sam Hovey, who conducted what he called a "music-fest" for the benefit of the Old

Folks' Home, last summer, proved by his methods as a manager. The company sat about Mrs. Dempster's lawn at little tables, and ate ices and drank cold things, while the women gossiped and the men smoked and wished they were home. Sam had engaged some singers to add to the music furnished by the orchestra, and, after several had appeared without attracting further attention than perfunctory applause, a slim young man sang a familiar ballad in a beautiful voice that seemed to pierce right straight into your heart.

The people stopped talking and even the waiters paused to listen. Young Hovey happened to be sitting at our table just then and seemed to grow very nervous about something. Finally, during the applause that greeted the first song, Sam dashed for the door that led to Mrs. Dempster's temporary stage. When he returned, the singer who had made such an impression was bowing to tremendous applause, but an encore was refused.

"There," said Sam, "I put a spoke in

that fellow's wheel—told the stage manager not to let him sing again."

"Pray, why not, Mr. Hovey?" I ventured.

"Why not?" he replied. "Just look at the people now," he cried, with an expansive smile and a proud flourish of his hand about the tables. Everybody was talking and laughing and the waiters were rushing back and forth. A throaty baritone now held the stage and no one was paying the least attention to his operatic flourishes.

"These people came here to have a good time," continued Sam, "and I'm going to give it to 'em."

Another cause of matrimonial infelicity is that too many husbands pay little or no heed to matters that appeal especially to their wives. If men "talk shop" so much, why should n't they let their women folks talk shopping? It may even prove disastrous for a husband to be such a stranger to his wife's ambitions that he has to be introduced to them every time he comes home unexpectedly. Your dear father

had an experience of this sort some years ago, which caused me no little chagrin and bothered him, although he did n't admit it.

It was in the days of the great literary revival in Chicago, and the Reading Society, of which I was secretary, met one afternoon at our house. After a collation, there was a very animated and intellectual discussion as to the authorship of the Shakespeare plays. In the midst of it your father came home, and as he had that day succeeded in driving Slicer & Co. out of business, he felt well-disposed, even to his wife's friends, and entered the parlor smiling almost genially. Of course, as my husband, he was treated with special consideration by the ladies of our society. Mrs. Cadwallader, our president, was especially gracious.

"And what do *you* think of the Donnelly-Bacon controversy?" she asked, deferentially. "Do you not believe that Mr. Donnelly is right?"

"What do I think of it, madam?" cried your father, angrily. "I think that Tim

Donnelly is a skin. The idea of his claiming rebate on the stuff because it was mildewed! Why that bacon was the finest strip of pig that ever went into a smoke-house, and I'll fight Donnelly up to the United States Supreme Court to prove it. That's what I think of the matter, madam, and you can bet I——"

But he never finished, for Mrs. Cadwallader turned on her heel with an outraged-goddess air and left the room. I mention the incident only as the best illustration that comes to mind of how ignorance of his wife's home pursuits may place a man in an embarrassing position. The worst of it was—from your father's standpoint—that as a result of Mrs. Cadwallader's influence with her husband, a big deal in which your father was interested was called off.

I sincerely hope, my dear son, that you are enjoying every minute of your wedding tour except those when you must be absent from Helen. Apropos of Helen, I see that your father takes you to task for holding her hand under the table at

breakfast. I would not let this criticism trouble me. It is certainly more enjoyable to hold a wife's hand under the table from choice than to be obliged to hold it *over* the table—with a plate in it. Go on loving Helen and paying her all the little attentions a gentleman should, and you will not regret it.

If anything ever brought about a breach between you and your pretty wife, I should be forced to believe you too easily filled with the sense of a man's importance as gathered from your father's correspondence. I note that you are warned not to be a "kind old dog"; you are told that most women think there is only their own side to the marriage relation; you are urged to let your wife have her own way with her mouth (I trust quotation marks are not necessary to differentiate your father's thoughts from my own). All this may be true. Who am I to deny it? But, between ourselves, how long do you think little Cupid would linger in a household where the husband was constantly trying to kick him out?

A woman is "worth just the price that's put on her," my boy, and if you keep Helen pretty close to the angels, she will almost develop wings, while, if you insinuate that she's a dog-trainer, you are apt to feel her nice little whip, and deservedly. Imagination plays a very important part in married life, and the lack of it, I may say advisedly, kills many a flourishing romance and sends love to the shambles. Remember that your wife cannot be expected to think, as you may do, in tierces, pails, sides, and short-ribs, and don't attempt to salt her Tennyson down or "render" her Browning.

By the way, General Heath is still staying here, despite your father's absolute lack of sympathy with him, and sundry hints to the effect that they need him at the Soldiers' Home. He says that, as a doting old papa, he must remain until he sees his dear Helen back and settled down. Much as I admire the general, I would suggest as delicately as possible (this is not for Helen's eye, which, I trust, is still too fixed upon the moon of honey to oc-

•

cupy itself with your letters; that will come in due season) I would, I say, advise that you do not encourage General Heath to become a fixture in the new Michigan Avenue house which father has bought for your wife. The general's spiritual nature is highly developed, to be sure, but it would, I fear, tend more in the direction of your sideboard than towards the church next to your new nest.

Speaking of the Michigan Avenue house, which, your father tells me, was bought with the profits made by squeezing poor old Johnson out of his last dollar by a corner in those awful "short-ribs," I am reminded of the old assertion that a woman is more indulgent to her grandchildren than her own, and the amendment somehow suggests itself that a man treats his daughter-in-law better than he does his wife. For I perceive that your father has so constituted the deed of the house that Helen can eject you if you become offensive. I trust Helen will appreciate her superior advantages.

Your home that is to be is beautiful, but

•



I advise you to change the name which has been cut into the brownstone arch above the door. Your father laughs at this and says: "What 's in a name?" Despite his superior experience, I think there is a great deal. Alfred Tennyson may have been no greater poet under that name than he would have been as Solon Muggs, but I 'm certain that he 's more generally read. I 've noticed, too, that in order to raise the price of real estate you must call an alley a terrace. While on the name topic, I told your father of an Italian barber named Antonio Paris, who married a cheap dressmaker here in Chicago four or five years ago. Now they live on the boulevard and are making no end of money. After marriage she hung out her sign under her new name—"Mrs. Paris, Dressmaker." Now it is "Mme. Paris, Robes," on a swell downtown street. All this happened naturally enough. Her patron, when asked where she got her new dress, can say, with a smile, "Oh, it came from Paris."

I might have added to your father that

the "Superior Corned Beef Hash" that he advertises so largely, might not sell so well under the more correct label of "Chopped Bull Beef." He possibly would not have appreciated it, for, like all humorists, he is jealous of competition.

I am not, so write me as long and as merry letters as you please, and remember that I count the days until I receive them.

Yours devotedly,

MOTHER.

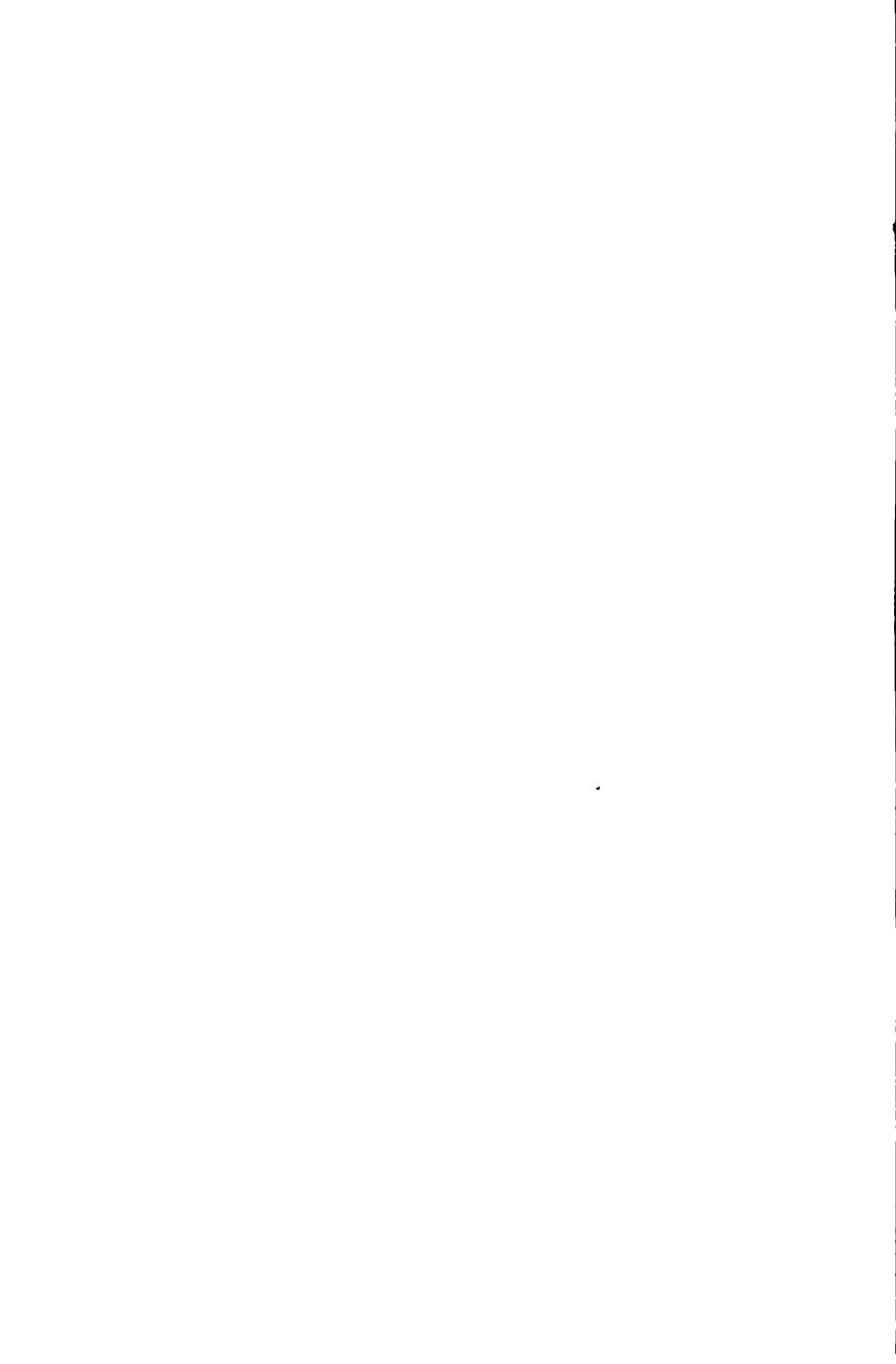
P. S.—I have just been over to your Michigan Avenue home and find that General Heath has already installed himself in the most comfortable chamber there. The room smelled rather queer, but he told me he had been cleaning the window-glass with alcohol. I must really insist that you change the name of your new residence. I will tell you why when I see you.

M.



## • THE THIRD LETTER

*The Son has Had the First Little "Tiff"  
with His Wife, and His Mother Gives  
Him Advice, both Sage and Merry,  
as to the Perils that Encompass Mat-  
rimony.*



CHICAGO, February 3, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I am pained indeed to read between the lines of your hurriedly written note that the inevitable (for, believe me, it is inevitable) "first tiff" has occurred with Helen. You do not blame yourself in the brief mention of your little disagreement, and this I take as a good sign, for when the husband begins life by blaming himself he soon arrives at the practice of "harking back" to that instance of self-renunciation, and thereafter places the burden of responsibility upon his wife. This is not as it should be, for the burdens should be equal in married life, and they usually are, if the truth is told, when what are vulgarly known as "family jars" arise.

It takes two to make a quarrel. The fracture so made can almost always be repaired, but beware the difficulty that has

the connivance of a third party! Three legs are good for a stool but not for an argument, for both husband and wife are afraid to become reconciled for fear the third party may suspect them of giving way.

I am happy that you have asked my advice, even in rather roundabout fashion. It proves that, though at the head of a household of your own, you still value my opinion, and despite what they say of mother-in-law influence, this is a good thing for you and for your wife too, although the time may come when she will not think so. The most beautiful appreciation of maternal infallibility that ever came to my notice I overheard the other day in front of our house. As I was alighting from the carriage two boys were having a heated argument.

"I tell you 't ain't!" cried the larger boy.

"Yes, 't is," insisted the other.

"No, 't is n't," reiterated the first.

"I tell yer it *is*!" shouted the little fellow. "My mother says 't is, and when *my mother* says 't is, 't is, even if 't ain't."

While I should not wish you to be quite so extreme, the full-grown man who, when in doubt, takes his mother's advice, might go farther and fare worse.

Now, concerning this little misunderstanding with Helen—my advice is to make her think you have entirely forgotten the whole affair. She may not believe that you have, but after a little she will accept your pretensions at their face value, taking your evident will for the deed. Incidentally, in reference to the special matter which was the beginning of your "bad quarter of an hour," let me say to you that no woman really wants your opinion of her new hat or gown unless you happen to like it. This maxim should be Rule I., in every sensible husband's bedroom by-laws.

And, for the sake of harmony, never permit yourself, in a moment of anger, to ask questions of your wife that you think pointed or sarcastic. If you do, some day one of the points of the sarcasm will be turned against yourself, to rankle in the wound, it may be for many months. As you know, Charley Shaw and his wife



have separated. She was—and is—really fond of him, but in a temper one day she taunted him, and he, seeing the opportunity, gave her better than she sent, and the “net product,” as your father puts it, is the divorce court.

Clara Shaw was vexed with her husband on an auto trip last summer because she thought he was overattentive to General Claxton’s pretty widow. Charley is naturally a bit gallant, you know, although I think he cared for Clara despite the fact that everybody said he married her for her money. Well, one word led to another, in the form of repartee (the most dangerous of conversational methods for married couples) until Clara lost all control of herself at some especially bright sally at her expense, and blurted out before them all :

“What would you be, Charley Shaw, if it was n’t for my money?”

“A bachelor,” replied Charley quietly.

Clara could never get over that speech, and the knowledge that it had made her the laughing-stock of her circle, and

although I believe she still loves her husband her suit for divorce is listed.

If you thought before marriage that your wife-to-be was perfect, just reflect for a moment that there is limited possibility that Helen entertained the same notion of you. Therefore, in simple courtesy, you ought to be willing to make the usual discount. (These business terms will creep into my correspondence. You see what influence your father has had upon me.) Remember that a girl cannot look the same before breakfast as she did when the only chance you had to see her was after every little line of worry had been massaged into her company manners. Yet it is your duty as a spouse to conceal your realization of that fact. Every woman cherishes the little delusion that her husband believes her to be more beautiful than she really is, but that he will not admit it for fear of making her vain. It does not pay to undeceive her on this point.

Despite the jokes at its expense, matrimony is serious business. Yet the average

man (I do not say "and woman," for my sex usually regards marriage contemplatively if not speculatively) rushes into it as if it was some sort of pleasant game. In his sermon last Sunday our pastor told a story illustrative of the peculiar levity with which the rising generation of men regard marriage.

He said that one of his missionary workers, about a year ago, came in contact with a young fellow not out of his teens who, although he was earning only nine dollars a week as a shipping clerk, was meditating marriage. The missionary remonstrated with the young man, pointing out the foolhardiness of his assuming the responsibilities of a family on such a meagre income, and finally secured a reluctant consent to postpone marriage for a year and to save all the money he could meanwhile. A couple of weeks ago the missionary met the young man again and asked him how he was getting along.

"Oh, first rate," was the reply. "I've had my pay raised twice."

"So? Then I suppose your marriage

will take place soon?" said the missionary.

"Oh, no, sir, I gave that up," he answered."

"Indeed!" said the missionary in some surprise, remembering the ardent devotion of the young man to his sweetheart. "Was—was there—well, some—some misunderstanding?"

"Oh no," said the youth, "but I'm saving up for a motor boat instead."

Tell this to Helen. It may help to reinstate you, and there is a moral hidden somewhere.

One more precept. Don't, if you value your future, ever attribute—at least not publicly—anything that displeases you in your wife to her mother. I warn you against this specifically, because it is an inheritance of man from his forefather of the Garden of Eden to pick out a possibly innocent woman for responsibility. The only reason that Adam blamed the apple incident on Eve was because he had no mother-in-law handy.

All this advice is totally needless in the

present petty crisis, but it may come in useful later on. Helen doubtless had straightened matters all out before I received your letter. She is probably just now—I'm sure I hope so—the dearest creature of earth to you and is undoubtedly flattering you to your heart's content. You may sniff at this, but the man is n't born yet that a clever woman who loves him could n't flatter, and there are mighty few women who don't do it. It pleases the man and is as harmless—and as sweet—as lovers' vows.

Don't expect no serpent in your Eden. Even the original garden had one and he was the biggest of his species. The happiness that we all seek is very successful at the secretive part of "hide-and-seek." Unhappiness alone comes to meet us half way. Just be satisfied with your share of the good things of life and swallow the bitter pills as quickly as possible. The less wry face you make the quicker they will slip down and be forgotten. Few of us can have everything we want in this world, and those who do are

apt to find that they soon come not to want anything. That life is not always smooth is fortunate for our neighbors, for if there were no adversity their conversational opportunities would be seriously restricted.

You will shun quarrels, I know, for in your love for peace you take after your mother. It is very easy to become accustomed to anything,—even to quarrels or worse. I remember that when I was a girl in Missouri, there was a family in which there were many children, living on the river several miles from our house. The river bank at the point was precipitous and the current swift. One day my father and mother were driving past and saw several little children playing in hazardous proximity to the stream. My father drove to the house and called to the mother.

“Your children are very near the river, neighbor,” he said.

“Is that so?” said the woman, without show of interest.

“Aren’t you afraid something will happen to them?” persisted my father.

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"Oh, no," answered the mother.

"I should think you would never know a moment's peace," continued my father, "with constant dread that some of your children would be drowned."

"Oh, no," said the woman, carelessly. "You see, we've lost several that way."

Don't let your sensibilities—yours and Helen's—be blunted in this way by usage.

It will do no harm if you sometimes disagree. If any two people are always of the same mind, it is almost invariably because there is only one mind between them. There may be good reason, that does not appear at first thought, for divergence of views. Just why, for instance, Dr. Maynard disapproves of automobiling, while Dr. Jenks commends it highly to his patients, is not clear until you reflect that Dr. Maynard is not a surgeon, while Dr. Jenks is.

Possibly if the average man realized before marriage all that wedlock means there would be a great falling off in the matrimonial statistics, although I do not go as

far as that incorrigible "old bach," Sherman De Peyster, who, when asked if he believed in love at first sight, replied: "Certainly I do. What man with the gift of second sight would ever get married?"

If more marriages were made in heaven, however, and fewer in maternal boudoirs while daughter is combing out her back hair, there would be a marked improvement in conditions. The average man is such a fool that he can be lured into almost any sort of a matrimonial net by a few well-placed smiles and some judicious compliments. One of De Peyster's stock stories is about a friend of his who married in haste to repent at his club. One day, says cynical De Peyster, his friend was lamenting his folly in not staying single.

"How on earth did you come to marry anyway?" asked De Peyster.

"I did n't," said his friend, and then he told this story, or at least De Peyster claims he did.

A Chicago man went up the Columbia



River after salmon, and one day, in trying to disentangle his hook, fell into the water. Owing to the rocks and an abrupt bank he was unable to get out and cried for help. A farmer, driving by, dragged him from the river with a rope of reins. The rescuer surveyed the dripping figure for a moment and then asked: "How on earth did ye come to fall in?"

The shivering angler surveyed his inquisitor through his damp monocle and then drawled: "My friend and savior, I did n't come to fall in. I came to fish."

De Peyster thinks this yarn (which I am sure he invented out of whole cloth) solves the matrimonial puzzle. It is certainly true that a very trifling circumstance will sometimes frighten away the trapped bird from the matrimonial snare. (This is De Peyster's phrase, not mine.)

Deborah Staples is still leading a life of "single blessedness" at sixty-five down in my home town because of just such a little incident. Over forty years ago she was engaged to one of the most eligible young men in that part of the country.



“Deborah Staples is still leading a life of ‘single blessedness’ at sixty-five.”



One evening he volunteered to take charge of his sister's baby while she went to a strawberry festival with Deborah. In the morning he left home. When next heard from he was in Australia and he never returned.

It occurs to me that this missive may strike you rather as a sort of "How-to-be-happy-though-married" handbook than as a letter, but please remember that you brought it on your own head by asking my advice.

Give my love to Helen. I somehow seem to think more of her than ever. With greatest affection, I am, as ever,  
MOTHER.

P. S.—Your father came in just as I finished and when he asked me what I had been writing I told him I had been giving you some advice on the preservation of matrimonial harmony. "Humph!" he said. "Tell him this: A switchman down at the stock yards was crushed between cars he was coupling to-day. A woman surgeon came on the ambulance

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and when he became conscious asked him his pedigree. Name and age came first. Then she asked, 'Married?' 'No,' he replied, 'this—worst thing—ever happened—to me.'"

It is surprising how the exigencies of business life have cultivated your father's imagination.

M.

## • THE FOURTH LETTER

*The Mother Gives Some Consideration to the Possible Effects of Heredity upon Her Son, and also to the Methods of Attaining the Social "Highest Heaven."*



CHICAGO, February 10, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I am very glad to have you say that you enjoyed my last letter. It proves once more the strength of a son's love for his mother, for I fear it is quite a test of affection for you to turn from "love's young dream" long enough to be patient with a garrulous old woman whose only real claim to attention, perhaps, is that she loves you.

I am glad, too, that "the episode with Helen," as you phrase it, has passed into the forgotten. I would not advise you to be too sure of it, however. A woman can absolutely forget a thing to-day and recall it in all its pristine vividness six months hence, if it is essential that she should do so to score in a controversy. Understand me that I do not mean Helen, or any special woman—only womankind. It's a sex accomplishment.



I am a little surprised at your hint, faint though it is, that you are looking forward to the time when you will resume active business. Young men on their honeymoon—at least young men with rich fathers—are usually anxious to postpone what they term the evil day of going back to work as long as possible. As the son of your father, however, it is too much to expect that the bacilli of competitive industry have not passed into your veins—if that is where those alleged creatures of modern discovery locate. I sincerely hope, however, that no matter how great your position in the world of affairs, you will never abandon those other interests which you have manifested hitherto, and which, believe me, are quite as essential to a successful life, when it is judged by the highest standard, as are the triumphs of merely commercial and speculative pursuits.

I have often wondered, with some anxiety I will confess, what the effect of heredity might be upon you ; and yet, if it is true, as savants say, that the mother influences the son more strongly, there is not

so much to fear. Not that I am vain, or wish to see you too much a pattern of myself ; but there are some things of which I am positive, and one is that I do not wish to think of you as slowly turning into a man whose whole religion is the piling up of countless dollars, and whose heart at last petrifies with the extract of gold.

When your father alludes to you as “a half-baked boy” he cites an advantage of your youth, for there still remains to you the opportunity to be cooked properly and to escape the greatest danger of the gold crucible—being hardened into a crusty, indigestible, and digestionless old man. Theories are well enough as guide-posts along the thoroughfare of life, but when rules of conduct solidify into axioms which admit of no vestige of free thought, sentiment, or sympathy their crabbed victim is generally as unbearable to himself as to other people. Cultivate your illusions, my boy ; cherish your idea that there may be good in everything and everybody. You may lose by it in individual cases, now

and then, but in the gross you will be the happier.

Encourage your imagination. Even if it does not lead to your rivalry with Shakespeare, or even with Laura Jean Libbey, it is worth stimulating if it serves only to lift you occasionally out of the slough which knows no rhythm but that of the accountant's pen, no beauty but that of a bank balance. I have always pictured Baron Munchausen and Ananias as happy men; not because they were such superb liars, but because they had imaginations powerful enough to permit it.

Yet the imagination should be the servant, not the master. Although there is no need of warning in this direction to the son of your father, you will pardon me an illustration in passing,—after the fashion of a more philosophic correspondent than I—of the danger that lies in wait for the too imaginative man. One of the species who delight in thrilling stories of which they themselves are the heroes, was neatly brought to book by Dr. Maynard

not long ago, according to your father. The raconteur was amusing, if not convincing a party in a Pullman smoker with the recital of some rather apocryphal hunting experiences. He had told several stories, each a greater test of credulity than its predecessor, and his hearers, especially the doctor, had become pretty weary.

Finally he launched out into a labored narration of the details of an alleged tiger hunt in which he had participated in India. He had arrived at a point where a tremendous specimen of the man-eater and himself were the only figures in his verbal picture. The others of the party had passed on, and he was alone amid dense underbrush, with the tiger close upon him. He had fired his last shot from rifle and revolver, and had even lost his knife. As the tiger crouched for a fatal spring, the anecdotist stopped to take breath or to cudgel his wits for a plausible way to extricate himself from the peril in which his imagination had placed him.

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“ Well, why don't you go on ? ” growled one of the party, who was specially tired of the hunting exploits. “ What happened next ? ”

The story-teller cleared his throat and looked around significantly. He had the solution for his dilemma. But what it was never became known, for Dr. Maynard interrupted.

“ The tiger tore him limb from limb,” said the doctor. “ It was his last hunt, poor fellow.”

Before it slips my mind, let me reply to the question in your last letter which you emphasize by repeating it three times. When I wrote advising that you change the name of your future residence, I had forgotten that it was a notion of your dear father not to tell you anything about his wedding gift until the carriage was at the door to take you to the station, and that you have never seen the house. As you are so curious I will write you about the matter, but promise me your father shall never see this letter.

It appears that the architect based his

plans upon an old English country house and duplicated it in brownstone, even to the name, which was "The Old Manse." While I submit that this is not an especially happy title for a brand-new Michigan Avenue establishment, that is not the reason I urge you to change it. You may recall, if you remember anything about your wedding-day, that your father insisted on giving the reporters the facts, instead of letting one of your ushers do it. Of course he told them you would live at "The Old Manse."

The next day one of the papers (I will not tell you which one for fear of homicide), whether by accident or design I, of course, don't know, ended the account of the wedding thus: "On their return from their wedding journey the happy couple will live at the old man's."

I am fearful that it will be a long time before this is forgotten; but if, when you return, you adopt the policy of telling the joke to every one you meet and laughing immoderately at it yourself, you may bury the incident. For it is not nearly as much

sport for people to laugh *with* another as *at* him. This plan would doubtless occur to you without my suggestion, for I recall that you have adopted a similar one with regard to the somewhat pungent business with which, thanks to your father, you have the misfortune to be allied. It was certainly a happy idea to make all the jokes you could at the expense of the pork-packing business, for the practice indeed built a back-fire against the ridicule of your friends when you were not present.

Although I do not think much of a so-called high society, in which people whose grandfathers made money resent having to associate with horrible people who make money themselves, you will naturally want Helen to move in the most exclusive circles. If you can induce father to sell to the Trust, you will have taken a long step toward the social highest heaven, for when it is known that people secure their incomes from dividends on watered stock they immediately advance in social standing. Anything is preferable,

thinks society, to actually selling something that is worth buying.

You will agree with me that the game of society is not worth the candle, but, for those with means to play it, it is a part of life, just as are the clothes that bother us. Unfortunately—or is it fortunately?—it is the little things that count most rapidly in the summing-up of existence. A pin-prick through the mortar of the masonry of a great dam is said to have once caused an inundation. In my own experience, I know of a case where a handsome lamp ruined a fairly prosperous man.

He gave the lamp to his wife on Christmas, and when it was set in the parlor it seemed to dwarf the furniture. New was bought, and then the old-fashioned square piano looked so shabby that a baby grand was installed. By this time the parlor was so full that the expensive furniture appeared cramped. This meant an addition to the house. When this was done, the interior was satisfactory, but from the outside the house looked "squat and horrid," as the wife expressed it.



The distressed couple spent the entire summer trying to plan how to remedy the evil. They consulted architects, and it was finally decided that another story must be built on the house. This was done at great expense and to the exceeding discomfort of the family, who continued to live there during the alterations.

At last the day came that was to see the end of the reign of carpenters and painters. But two men—plumbers—were left late in the afternoon. They had been making some connections in the upper story and were packing up their tools to go away, when one of them dropped a piece of lead pipe over the banister into the hall below. Harassed by the unexpected bills which the transformation had begot, the husband afterwards declared that he almost wished the pipe had struck him in the head.

But it did n't. Instead, it smashed into a thousand fragments the lamp that had caused all the trouble. A few months later the house was sold at sheriff's sale.

The wife, of course, was generally

blamed in this affair, but I question the justice of it. I admit, however, that although the policy of "give and take" should exist between husband and wife, the husband should not do all the giving and the wife all the taking. It is a poor husband who will gratify his wife's every whim at the cost of bankruptcy. Such a policy pleases no one, not even the tradesmen; and the poorhouse and the divorce court are on the same street. *Per contra*, there are husbands who carry their economy to lengths that are quite as disastrous as extravagance. What do you think, for instance, of a man so prudent that he advised his wife to buy, at a bargain sale, some second-hand dresses that did not fit her, and then told her to diet till she could get them on?

There's many a man who insists on domestic economy at the expense of the quality of the steak, who has absolutely no hesitancy in paying \$1.75 for his downtown luncheon. But why point this out to you? As the son of a rich man, you will need no caution against parsimony.

Come easy, go the same. Unless your father should suddenly develop a more intense desire than he has yet manifested to help other people grow rich, there is no danger that you will ever be pressed for money, except, perhaps, by Helen, when she throws her arms about your neck as you are starting down-town, and asks you to leave her a check for five hundred. But you will soon get used to that and not pay any attention to pressure of this sort ; that is, if you take after your father. Fortunately, unlike most love matches, yours has " money to burn," as the boys say.

You have a beautiful wife and a beautiful home to put her in, and you will have money to support it. What more do you want? Social distinction, perhaps. This you can acquire in two ways. One is by spending more money than any other person of your set. Your dear father will see to it that you do not do that. Another way is by being unique, distinctive, even bizarre, in everything. Whatever you do to attract attention, be sure and

do it more loudly than any one else. Despite the Pied Piper of Hamelin story, a man with a tin whistle obviously cannot draw away the crowd that is following a brass band.

This may not appear to be natural advice from a mother to her son, but I don't want you to be disappointed in anything you undertake, and you might as well learn some disagreeable truths from me as wait to cull them from expensive experience. Write soon.

Yours affectionately,

MOTHER.

P. S.—If you see anything in this letter that appeals to you as ridiculous, please bear in mind that I have recently read many of your dear father's letters to you.

M.



## • THE FIFTH LETTER

*Some Random, but Nevertheless Extremely  
Practical, Thoughts on how Business  
and Æsthetics may or may not  
Mingle in the Home Inspire the Ma-  
ternal Pen.*



CHICAGO, February 22, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I am rejoiced indeed to hear from you so soon, and to be assured that my well-intentioned small talk—for it is little else—on matters pertaining to what your dear father calls “the gimcracks” of life does not bore you. I note, with a smile that I wish you were here to see, your appreciation of the fact that I have patterned my advisory letters by those of your father, in accompanying my doses of philosophy with liberal portions of sweetmeats in the form of anecdote. I know, as does your father, for he has said so, that when a letter or advertising pamphlet is artistically peppered with stories, it will be zealously read lest an especially good one be overlooked. Now that I have betrayed my secret, I trust you will suffer no loss of interest in my humble efforts to walk in



the path so generously blazed by your father.

I am pleased with the enthusiasm you manifest with regard to some of the topics that have appealed to me as worthy of place in a correspondence between mother and son. Especially gratifying, as well as natural, is your inquiry as to how business and æsthetics mingle in the home. The question arouses in me a train of thought to which I do not dare give full speed, for, far down on the tracks, walking along with somewhat uncertain step, is a figure that I fear I might mangle. There are some confidences that a mother may not divulge, even to her son ; but I trust I may make my meaning clear to you, in what I shall have to say, without descending to those personalities which some letter-writers deem to be a necessary portion of wit.

You ask what effect commercialism of the inveterate sort has upon literature, art, and music in the family life. I am glad to have you thus early give some thought to the finer things of the household. I may say I am gratefully surprised, for your

training has been so thoroughly in the hands of the "House" since you left Harvard, that one would scarcely expect the culture of that great institution to survive the onslaughts of pork to which it has been subjected. I rejoice that you are still so much my son.

Your inquiry has a special force, too, from the fact that your sweet and lovable new wife has aspirations and talents for those things that differentiate the drawing-room from the counting-room. She plays and sings, as you know ; she does not confound Bach with Offenbach, and she knows that Richard Strauss did *not* write the "Blue Danube" waltz. In art her taste has gone beyond china dogs on the mantelpiece, and she has ceased to believe that Marcus Stone's sentimental pictures, with his eternal lovers' quarrels, are the finest things in the world. These qualities she inherited, for her father, the General, is a man of considerable native refinement, in spite of his unfortunate predilection for the society of another old soldier, General Barleycorn. You and she are thus

opposites in atavism, and should, therefore, find your match almost frictionless.

But, after all, it depends upon how much of the pork-packing establishment you bring home with you in the afternoon, whether or not the fine arts will reign there. You will find that the odor of the trying-out department will kill the delicate flavor of a Mendelssohn sonata, and that sausage, while excellent in its place on a hot breakfast plate, goes better with buckwheat cakes than with Browning. Nor should you let your view of art become wholly focused on the red label that has made your father famous.

Speaking of the appreciation for art and its bearings on domesticity, I am reminded of a little incident that happened at the Cadwalladers' some years ago. We were invited to a little dinner there given in honor of Sir Edward Acresight, the celebrated English animal painter, engravings of whose pictures were then in vogue all over the country. The talk, of course, turned upon art, and Mr. Cadwallader finally volunteered the information that he

had in his possession the most beautiful steel engraving in the world.

"And what may-aw that be, Mr. Cadwallader?" asked the great artist, naturally expecting his host to mention one of his own works, and smiling in anticipation thereof.

"Here you are," said Mr. Cadwallader, putting his fat fingers into his waistcoat pocket and pulling out a new bill. This he flourished in the face of Sir Edward three or four times.

"It's a ten-thousand-dollar bill, by ginger!" he exclaimed, "and the only one now outstanding. Ain't that jest about the prettiest engraving you ever seen, my lord?"

The great artist was profoundly disgusted, and so were all the rest of us excepting your father. He was so delighted at what he called "old Cad's characteristic Yankee cheek" that he took him in on a corn deal the next day, and when it failed had to pay a hundred thousand of Mr. Cadwallader's losses. Mr. C., you know, had put everything, except the ten thousand dollar bill, in his wife's name. At

some future time I may expatiate on the merits of this plan, which your father used to adopt very frequently until he became rich enough not to need my services.

I remember, some thirty years ago in the little Missouri town where we began our career, that your father had started a little sausage factory in a region where the people generally were set in their ways, and ate their pork products salted. Naturally, the business did not flourish as it has since the American public has grown more careless as to what it eats, and things began to look dismal. One afternoon your father come rushing home very early, all out of breath, and with a strange look in his eye.

“Do you know what day this is, dear?” he asked, trying to conceal his emotion. I thought very hard for a moment, and then it all dawned upon me. I flushed with pleasure.

“Why—why, it’s my birthday!” I exclaimed. “How lovely of you to think of it”—he had n’t for several years—“and to come way home just to tell me so!”

"Yes," he replied, in a queer little tone that I took to be emotion, "and I'm going to give you the house for your very own. See, here is the deed all fixed, and requiring only your signature. Better get pen and ink as quick as you can, for I've got to hurry back to the shop."

Full of delight I did as he wanted, and was just kissing him for a dear, generous husband when a violent knock sounded at the front door, and then, without ceremony, in walked Sheriff Farmer with a paper in his hand.

"Sorry, neighbor," he said, with a sickly grin, "but I've jest got to clap an attachment on your house. Don't like to, but duty is duty, an' the law's supreme."

"I'm sorry, too," returned your father, jovially, "but you see, Sam, the house is the property of my wife. Just gave it to her as a little birthday remembrance. Guess you'll have to take your attachment away with you, and make pipe lighters of it. Come in again, Sam."

That day the sausage factory failed, and on the following Sunday, the Methodist

minister, who was one of the creditors for pork supplied to the business, preached on the text : " Houses and riches are the inheritance of fathers, and a prudent wife is from the Lord," which you, perhaps, know is from the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Proverbs.

I fear I have wandered far afield from the topic upon which I intended to write almost wholly, but you will, I know, pardon a retrospective mother, who finds in her own past many things that may adapt themselves to your present and future with some degree of profit.

You will discover that your home is to be very much as you wish to have it. If you view it perpetually through the spectacles of business, counting the cost of every note of music, or fine painting, or good book, your wife will very soon come to regard you as part of the commercial system that she must at all points outwit, if she can. She may have her artistic interests apart from you, it is true, but you may count it as certain that when a woman is known as the proprietor of a

salon, her husband is counted as a few degrees lower than the butler. And I have also observed that he generally drinks. Do not make *your* household a case of salon *vs.* saloon.

You know that I have loved books and that I have managed to keep the spirit of letters alive in our house. But how I have contrived to do this in the face of enormous obstacles you do not know, and I shall not attempt to tell you. For Helen's sake, however, who, I see, wishes to do as I have done, yet has not my iron determination, I beg of you to help make her path easy. Read the stock market reports and the quotations of pork as much as you wish in your office, but do not lard your dinner talk with these things exclusively. Instead, assume a literary virtue if you have it not, and try to find out your wife's latest fancy. One apparently chance quotation from a favored novel is worth more than a new hat to such a woman. Above all, never adopt your father's plan of having the shelves of a so-called "library" filled with long wooden



blocks, on the backs of which were painted facsimiles of various standard works. Of course, they were high up, out of reach of chance inquisitive callers, but, even so, they once made serious trouble for him.

It all happened one winter evening when, as fate had it, the furnace was working badly and there was no firewood in the house. Your father was expecting the famous Prof. Erckstrom, who had just patented a wonderful process for converting pigskin into morocco leather, which the "House" was extremely desirous of obtaining. As the library was chilly, your father hit upon the expedient of taking down some of the blocks from the upper shelves and using them in the fireplace. When the professor arrived, they were just beginning to blaze merrily.

The two sat down before the genial fire, and began to talk of the great invention. The professor had about reached the point of agreeing to your father's proposals when all at once his eye was attracted by something on the andirons.

He started up with a furious exclamation of rage.

"What's the matter?" asked your father.

"Matter? Matter enough!" shouted the great man. "You have insulted me, sir, grossly insulted me! Look at that fireplace, sir! I leave your house this moment!"

And that was what he did. When he had gone, your father examined his improvised logs, and found that the one most exposed to view consisted of the "Collected Works of Adolphus Erckstrom, Ph.D., LL.D., etc., etc."

I may add that the professor practically gave his process to Carver & Co. and that they have made a hundred thousand a year from it ever since.

The moral of the incidents I have recounted for you to-day I need not enforce upon you in any sledge-hammer way. You doubtless realize by this time that utilitarianism is to the home what Unitarianism is to the Evangelical church—very much of a disturbing element.

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Nor does it always profit a man in dollars and cents. He who lives in Grub Street perpetually, gets just about Grub Street rates for his wares.

With love to Helen and yourself, ever,  
MOTHER.

P. S.—Your father has caught a very bad cold going through the storage plant to discover some leak in the ammonia pipes. He believes he is to have pneumonia, and talks about a new will. Have you vexed him in any of your letters?

M.

• THE SIXTH LETTER

*The Son Having Manifested a Tendency  
toward Authorship, His Counsellor  
Volunteers Suggestions on the Pursuit  
of Literature, and how to Catch up  
with It.*



CHICAGO, March 2, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I am charmed—more so than pen and ink can tell—by the sentiments expressed in your last letter. That, despite the commercial associations that have been such an intimate part of your life the last few years, you are still able to lift your eyes above the pages of the ledger, is a tribute to maternal inspiration (if I may be pardoned the conceit) that delights me beyond measure.

There is still hope that our family may achieve other fame than that which, desirable as it may be, is bounded by trade circles ; other rewards than those chronicled by the figures of commercial rating. Your ambitions, my dear boy, may yet enable your silly old mother to find your name between the covers of other volumes than those issued by Dun and Bradstreet,

— estimable gentlemen, no doubt, but scarcely the publishers to be coveted by a man with the higher ambition.

You say you have not decided whether you will begin your literary career with a novel or with a play. Although I am confident that you would do yourself justice in either, let me suggest that you begin with a novel. I say this simply because the greater includes the less. Having written your novel, it will be an easy matter for you, after it is successfully published, to turn it into a play. In these days, when everything, from the Scriptures to breakfast foods, is dramatized, you will have no difficulty in cutting up your novel into acts, no matter what it may be. Thus you will give your mother the joy of seeing your dear name not only on the title-page of a book, but on the billboards and in the amusement pages of the Sunday newspapers. This will certainly be a pleasing variation, after having seen the family name for so many years nowhere but on can labels and street-car placards. It is true that in such celebrity you risk

having suspenders and neckwear named after you, but even the greatest geniuses of the past did not escape obloquy.

Despite your father's opinion that men who write novels and plays do so only because they could n't earn a living any other way, I know that when your intention becomes public you will be envied in your set. They will buy your novel, even although they insist that it is not possible you could write one, and they will go to see your play, if only to find out how bad it is. All this will not trouble you, for the soul of an imaginative man is quite above animadversion.

Although I shall say nothing until your project has taken more definite shape, I will do my best to secure the co-operation of your father. If money will sell his canned meats, it ought to sell your book. His advertising department is not so burdened that it could not "carry a side line," as he expresses it. I admit there is danger in enlisting for a novel the services of an advertisement writer whose lyre is tuned to pæans of pig, but with proper direction



he would not go far wrong. Incidentally, it occurs to me that your father's former advertising man was taken away from him by a fancy salary from a big publishing house. So it may be that books and pork products, as salable commodities, are not so very far apart, after all.

You ask my advice as to the kind of a book to write. I can only reply, in a general way, write one that will sell. Posthumous fame is well enough, but, like the man who was promised "a gorgeous funeral" by a society to which he belonged, you will not be there. You certainly don't want Helen to be placed in the position of Mrs. Jerome LeFarge—whose husband, you may have heard, writes books. Mrs. LeFarge was at a reception one evening when a loquacious woman (one of the kind who find out enough about you in five minutes for them to distort for months) asked what her husband's business was.

"My husband is an author," replied Mrs. LeFarge, with just a shade of pride.

“ Oh, yes, I know,” replied her inquisitor, “ but what does he do for a living ? ”

While I am not an authority, I have a few ideas on novels which may be of value to you. Some of them were derived from your Uncle Henry, who was once in the book-publishing business. He was forced into it, because he had to take over the concern for debt. I wish he was still in it, for your uncle has always been rather easy for me to handle. In the first place, be sure that there is something in your book to attract attention. In these days, style is of comparatively little importance in a novel. The stylists exist and still write books which the first-class book stores keep—usually much longer than pleases them. But it is the matter rather than the manner that sells books nowadays to the follow-my-leader herd of book-buyers. In other words, it is what is put in a book, not how it is put there.

We had a new preacher at our church a week ago last Sunday, by exchange with the pastor. He was exceedingly new style

and his method of delivery was certainly unique. He scarcely moved during the half-hour of his sermon. There was not a gesture, and the words, read from manuscript, flowed from his lips without the slightest attempt at emphasis.

Had not the thoughts been beautiful and forceful, the sermon would have been monotonous in the extreme. But the address was filled with ideas that appealed by their novelty and by the new standpoint from which familiar things were viewed. Yet there were those who did not like him. I walked home from church with Mrs. Cadwallader and Mrs. Damon, and they fell into a most un-Sabbatarian argument as to the merits of the preacher.

"The tamest sermon I ever sat through," insisted Mrs. Cadwallader.

"Tame! How *can* you say that?" exclaimed Mrs. Damon. "It was beautiful! The ideas were so glorious, so new and striking. It was magnificent!"

"Stuff!" retorted Mrs. Cadwallader. "Why, the man never moved once or

raised his eyes from his manuscript. The idea of reading a sermon, every word!"

"As long as it was *that* sermon," cried Mrs. Damon, "it would n't have mattered if he'd *whistled* it."

If your novel, my son, is to attract attention other than from the few people who just happen, or who have to read it, there must be something in it to provoke comment. It really does n't make much difference what kind of comment. Condemnation has made more books than praise, says your Uncle Henry, although he couched the idea in more vigorous phraseology.

I remember that the great feature of the first circus I attended as a child was a camel. It was the only animal of the breed that had ever reached Missouri, and curiosity was high over it. My father was especially interested, and he asked many questions of the keeper, a frowsy-looking person in dirty overalls.

"And of what value is the hump on the creature's back?" he inquired at length.

"That hump?" said the man, pulling a bit of straw from his mouth and pointing at the animal, as if he had never seen it before.

"Yes," answered my father.

"What's its vally?" My father nodded. "Well, the camel 'd be no good at all without de hump."

"Indeed!" said a bystander. "Why not, pray?"

"Well," said the attendant, as he passed to the other side of the animal, "if he had no hump he'd look like a big cow, and you jays would n't pay half a dollar to ask fool questions about him."

Therefore, my boy, if you wish to emulate Hall Caine and Marie Corelli, put a hump in your novel. I admit that this is easier said than done. I can give one bit of advice, however, that is practical and that you can readily follow. It is from the wisdom of your Uncle Henry, to whom, by the way, I mentioned your intention to write a book.

"Huh!" he replied. "So he's got that bug, has he?"

I did n't understand, but said nothing as I did not wish to be thought behind the times. Your uncle is a great hand at figures of speech, you know, and I assume that his expression has something to do with literary microbes or bookworms. But the advice he gave at my urging is certainly excellent.

"Tell the boy," he said, "to let his book stand on its own legs. The friendly critic is N. G. Even if your friends mean to do the right thing, they won't. Probably they could n't."

Then he told a story to illustrate the point that friendship changes the mental attitude of a person toward a friend's undertakings. When Uncle Henry first came to Chicago, he lived in one of those apartment houses where the only air you get is that flavored by other people's cooking. In the apartment below your uncle was a family that had boiled dinner every Thursday, beefsteak and onions every wash-day, and fried fish on Fridays. The aroma was economical in taking away appetite, but otherwise was

undesirable. Your uncle's wife insisted on moving, although they had a year's lease, and after considerable discussion Henry finally gave in.

One Thursday he came home a little earlier than usual.

"Well, I've found a nice flat, Hannah," he said. "Whew! How vile that cabbage smells!"

"Henry, dear?" said his wife.

"What is it?" he asked.

"After all, it seems a shame to move, doesn't it? This is such a pretty flat. And then it's such a nice neighborhood for the children, with the park so handy and plenty of room for them to play."

"Yes, I know," said your uncle, "but that —— cooking!"

"Yes, I know, but, Henry dear," said his wife apologetically, "you see I met the lady down stairs to-day—Mrs. Arnold introduced me—and she's really such a lovely lady, so sweet and sunny."

"Tell the boy not to trust his friends," said your uncle, after his story, "but send his book to a publisher. The first time,

he'll get the publisher's real opinion. After that, that particular publisher'll be as bad as friends—that is, unless the book does n't sell. In that case, he'll not even get an opinion out of him."

Uncle Henry says that by no means should you write a play. He asserts that if it's a bad play your family will be ashamed of you, and that if it's a good one the only way you'll be likely to get it produced will be to foot the bills yourself. I don't exactly understand how he made this out, but I did n't question him. He added, too, that "when a man seeks fame in a book all he has to fear is the failure of the public to appreciate his product. When he writes a play he is forced to depend upon actors to interpret for him, and that may not prove undiluted joy."

I fear that here your uncle may be prejudiced, for in his youth he wrote a play. I asked him about it once, years ago. In reply he only growled out: "It was so good it closed the theatre." Probably by this he meant that it had a long run.

Speaking of theatres suggests that I



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must cease, for it is later than I thought, and your father and I are going to see Mansfield in *Richard III*. Your father always gets tickets for this play whenever it is given. I think it is because there is so much blood-letting in it.

With greatest love to the future author,  
MOTHER.

P. S.—If I were you, I should be careful in the selection of the name for your novel. Don't begin to write till you have chosen it, for it's much easier to fit a novel to a name than a name to a novel. Your Uncle Henry suggests "The Silent Woman." Says it would make talk.

M.

• THE SEVENTH LETTER

*A Convincing Demonstration of the Fallacy and Folly of Aphorisms, Adages, and Mercenary Maxims, when Dissected by the Scalpel of Common Sense.*



CHICAGO, March 10, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

As you know better than any one else, although I have been from your tiniest infancy your guide and friend, I have never set up as your philosopher, unless my recent assumption of advisory letter-writing may have placed me in that light. Perhaps it is well that I have not, for it is possible that a woman has not that calm and judicious temperament that can take the common and sordid events of life and turn them into maxims that shall make a young man commercially successful—and commonplace. I have always considered that one parent of that sort is a "plentiful sufficiency," as my dear old Aunt Betsy used to say.

If you do not now worship the almighty dollar, it is because you are in love, and have put the dove on the pedestal of the

eagle. What you will become when the years shall have made Helen less of a delightful surprise to you, I do not like to think. One cannot always breathe miasma and expect to be free from the fever ; nor, any less, can one perpetually inhale the atmosphere of pork and pelf and not be defiled.

I realize that your father's aphorisms and adages—the last resort of one who can convince in no other way—have had their effect upon you and may have warped your real nature over to the side of mere commercialism. Time was when I hoped and believed that you would become a poet ; your verses written at Harvard extolling the beauty of Miss Dorothy Drake's understanding (a girl of rare intellectuality, I presume) were fervent enough to warrant my expectation, while your "Ode to a Lost Sawbuck," published in the *Lampoon* when you were its business manager, showed wit of no common order.

Doubtless you would have followed the path to Parnassus had it not been for

your father. I was willing to make you a liberal allowance if only you would become a man of literary culture, but I was overruled. The only way in which your father would permit you to be a poet was, you will remember, in attempting advertising verses for the House. There you failed, you know,—and to your everlasting honor be it said,—for a man who could write poetry around a sausage would be no more than a fit candidate for the magazines. However, as you are now to write a novel, I do not despair ; even a modern novel is better than nothing, even if it is at the antipodes from literature.

As usual, I have been led aside from my original thought by my fervor for things artistic. What I purposed to do at the outset was to see if I could not save you in some measure from the result of your father's mercenary maxims. I could think of no better way than to select some of those sayings which, on the surface, appear most effective, and show the fallacy and folly of them. You will find that the smartest of them are the

most easily punctured. The bigger the balloon, the quicker it falls to earth when the gas is let out. Let me prove it to you.

Here is an aphorism culled at random from one of the letters you left for me : "A fellow with an office full of relatives is like a sow with a litter of pigs—apt to get a little thin and peaked as the others fat up." Passing the delicacy of the comparison, I merely remark that the farmer maintains the sow for that very purpose, and that there is more money in fattening up ten healthy young porkers than in stuffing the mamma pig until she cannot see.

Again : "The first thing that a young merchant must learn is that his brand must never appear on a note, or a ham, or a man that is n't good." I'm afraid that your father, by his own career, has disproven that. His brand has for years appeared on the ham, and yet he has been a financial success. How can he expect you, who know the chemistry of the House pretty well by this time, to believe any such statement as that? I will do

him justice in one respect, however. He has been an exceedingly fair man in the matter of providing his family with food, and he never insisted that our table and our products should be one and inseparable. I rallied him on this point once, I remember, and he replied that a wise doctor never burdened his system with his own medicine, but got a fellow-physician to prescribe for him. And I suppose that is why he always bought Carver & Co.'s goods for our own larder.

I note that you are told that "home is n't what's around you, but what's inside you." At first glance this might appear to be a condensed disquisition on the values of certain foods, but I will give the writer credit for a higher thought. Undoubtedly he meant that the spirit within, the heart, the conscience, are in themselves able to make the home happy. A pure fallacy! Home is perfect only when its visible attributes are noble and refined. Books, pictures, music, love, tenderness—these cannot stay inside one and yet make a paradise for two. He who



keeps his affection locked up in his own breast is a pretty sorry husband and very apt to be misjudged, as he deserves.

A case in point occurs to me, and it has the merit of being news as well. Did you know that Mrs. Cadwallader is suing old "Cad" for divorce on the ground of incompatibility of temper? Well, she is, and the case began the other day before Judge Emerson. The queerest part of it is that Cadwallader is contesting the suit, saying that he 'll "be hanged if another man is going to get such a lit'ry high-stepper and all-around brainy woman as Mrs. Cad."

During Mr. Cadwallader's testimony he declared fervently that he had always loved his wife.

"Did you ever tell her so?" asked the lawyer opposed to him.

"Tell her so!" roared old "Cad," scornfully. "Of course not! Why, I thought a woman who could tell what that old fool Ibsen and that young dolt Yeats meant, could see well enough what was inside a plain, ordinary pork-packer."

That 's just the trouble, my son. The ordinary man takes too much for granted, especially if he is a little bit tongue-tied when it comes to speaking words of affection. Do not fall into such error yourself. Helen may see through you to perfection, but she will want you to give her some of yourself, nevertheless.

I suppose I might go on, my son, to the end of this letter, and of several more after it, pulling the stuffing from your father's epigrams. But already I am weary of the task, which is no more inviting and about as edifying as would be the work of eviscerating the sausages of our celebrated House. I merely wanted to show you the ease with which any philosophy depending upon mere smartness can be made null and void. It is like some of the music of Richard Strauss: take the cymbals away and there is nothing left.

Speaking of music reminds me of a horrid contretemps made by Mrs. Cadwallader at the Theodore Thomas concert the other day. It was a matinée, and, of

course, all the set were there. The orchestra was playing the *Oberon* overture; the one, you know, where the sudden crash comes, followed by a moment's pause. The crash came, and so did the pause; and in that instant of absolute quiet the voice of Mrs. Cadwallader rose clear and distinct all over the Auditorium: "We fry ours in lard."

Oh, it was dreadful! The gallery girls tittered, and the back of Mr. Thomas's neck grew scarlet. They say that he asked, after the concert, who had dared to talk aloud during the playing, but as Mrs. Cadwallader is one of the heavy guarantors of the orchestra, I don't think much can be done about it. Poor Mrs. Cadwallader was sick in bed over the affair, so she has had punishment enough. It simply shows that a deal of talk in this world passes unnoted in the fortissimo of things; the danger is in not knowing just when the pianissimo or the complete "rest" comes.

I trust, my son, that you are not to grow into one of those men who roar

through life on the mistaken assumption that intellect disports itself in noise. I realize that when you are talking with your father in the cooperage department of the House, you must shout to be understood, but you will doubtless remember—differing from him as you do—that barrels are not made in the drawing-room. The only time I can conceive when you will be justified in loud talking, is when you have had a difference with Helen, and find her playing Wagner at the piano, with the sostenuto pedal on to show you her complete indifference. There you may match uproar with uproar, and no true student of human nature will cast the first stone at you.

But do not allow yourself to be ensnared into an untimely proclamation of your independence, as was good old Elder Edgerly, my girlhood's parson, of whom you have often heard me speak. The Elder had acquired a violent dislike for one of the influential women of his flock, who also happened to be a very warm friend of his wife. Things finally arrived

at such a pitch that the Elder never came home from prayer-meeting or conference without immediately regaling Mrs. Edgerly with the bitter vials of his wrath poured out against Mrs. Freeman.

Mrs. Edgerly, being a good soul who always stuck to her friends until she found that they were not sticking to her, finally became weary of the Elder's constant abuse of Mrs. Freeman, and remonstrated. But her husband declared that the woman was his cross, sent by the evil one to worry him,—the Elder was afterwards taken to an asylum,—and that if he could n't denounce her in public he would in the privacy of his home; and wanted to know whether or not he was master in his own household? At that Parthian shot Mrs. Edgerly was silent, but she did lots of thinking to make up for it.

In less than a week there was a conference meeting on the subject of raising the Elder's salary, and the proposition was defeated on the ground that the Lord, having given the congregation poor crops, did n't wish it to waste its money in this

particular way. The Elder was furious, and, of course, attributed the failure to elevate his stipend to the machinations of Mrs. Freeman. He came home on the jog trot, and, as soon as he had reached the sitting-room, exploded violently. He told his wife how her very dear friend had been instrumental in taking the hog and hominy out of their mouths, that on her account they would probably land in the poorhouse, and much more to the same effect, increasing in volume of tone until he made the ceiling shake.

Just as he wound up with a final burst of eloquence, a closet door opened and out stepped Mrs. Freeman, holding forth her hand and smiling as sweetly as if she were answering a proposal of marriage.

"Good evening, Elder," she said. "I'm sorry I could n't attend the conference to-night, as I was going to suggest paying your increase of salary myself. In fact, here is the check for the coming year. Take it and——"

But her sentence was never finished, for, with a wild snort of anguish, the Elder

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fled into the night and did n't return until next day. They say he spoke in whispers to his wife for a month.

Of course, you will never abuse Helen's friends to her face, but that 's the best way if you are to do it at all.

Yours affectionately,

MOTHER.

P. S.—I had a letter from General Heath to-day, dated Dwight, Ill. He says he is at a hotel there, the Keeley House, or some such name, but that he is n't entirely happy. He will be back at your house-warming.

M.

• THE EIGHTH LETTER

*How Pluck Discounts Luck, and Other  
Equally Sagacious Thoughts, Illus-  
trated by Maternal Anecdotes of  
Rural Life and Character That are  
both Fitting and Funny.*





CHICAGO, April 4, 1897.

• MY DEAR SON :

Your last letter was received with pleasure, although I will admit that I am a bit disappointed at your statement that you have decided to postpone indefinitely your work on the novel that you proposed. You say that nothing occurs to you as a suitable theme, and that you intend to wait until something suggests itself. Let me tell you my belief that precious little in this world that is any good "suggests itself." Inspiration is an excellent word for the critics, but the genius whose product is called inspired, could, nine times out of ten, tell a quite different story, in which the most dogged of hard work would figure largely. Ideas "suggest themselves" usually only to those who tempt them by due preparation of steadfast endeavor.

Your theory that you must wait for an idea to strike you, instead of bestirring yourself to strike the idea, reminds me of the experience of young Charley Forsythe with a horse at the Springs last summer. He and a couple of friends went trout-fishing one morning, driving to a brook ten miles off. They unharnessed the horse and tied him to a tree while they were fishing. When their sport was over they found considerable difficulty in returning the various parts of the harness to the proper places, as none of them had enjoyed any extended experience with horseflesh. Finally, however, everything seemed to be all right but the bit. The horse did n't appear inclined to open his mouth so that this important article could be adjusted. They tried several methods, but all failed.

"What in time will we do?" asked one of the party.

The others shook their heads. Then Forsythe spoke up suddenly, as if a bright thought had occurred to him.

"I have it," he said.

"Well?" said the others in unison.

"We must wait till the confounded beast yawns," exclaimed Charley.

Now the man who waits for the world to yawn to his advantage will do a lot of yawning himself. The only way to write a novel, or anything else, is to write it. It may be no good, but perhaps, after it is written, that fact may be made clear in some way and the knowledge be a distinct gain. To the man who is worth much, one failure is usually more of an inspiration than two successes, for it stimulates ambition and "gets his mad up." The history of almost every largely successful man, whether in business or art or literature, is one of early failures crowned by subsequent successes. It is the pluck to live down the failures and to improve upon them that differentiates the man of genius from his fellows.

I've always had a fondness for the old story, well known to every Missourian of the older generation, of the farmer, his two sons, and the load of hay. One day, during the haymaking, the old fellow

became rather caustic in his criticisms of his sons' working ability and, as the story goes, nettled them by his boastings of the work he could do. One word leading to another, the argument resulted in the father asserting that, even at his age, he could do more work than both his boys. To prove it he wagered his best cow against a pair of woollen mittens that he could stack hay on the rick faster than both his sons could pitch it up to him.

This was just what the boys wanted, and they went at the work with a speed that kept the old man busier than he had ever been in his life. His alertness surprised the sons, who felt they must exert every muscle to keep him from forever having the laugh upon them. The hay was nearing the top of the rick as they redoubled their exertions. As the farmer received the forkfuls and placed them in position, he kept crying, "More hay, more hay!" and the three were almost exhausted, when the old man suddenly lost his balance and fell to the ground with a considerable portion of the load.

"Hi, there, dad!" cried the older boy.  
"What you down here for?"

The old fellow scrambled to his feet, wiped the dust from his eyes, and gasped out, "Down arter more hay, consarn ye!"

Although this old story may be familiar to you, the moral that it enforces cannot be driven home too often. The harder the odds, the greater the difficulties, the more painful the blow to hope, the greater the need of pluck. As for your novel, why not take your suggestion for it from real life? The world is full of happenings that are quite as interesting as any incidents that imagination can create.

In to-day's paper, for instance, I saw a bit of news that struck me as quite as full of possibilities to a clever writer as anything he could derive from "inspiration." It was a despatch from a Western city which told of the failure of a prospective bridegroom to appear for his wedding. Instead of retiring to her room to weep, the deserted bride gave the invited guests a good time by organizing a progressive

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euchre party and using the wedding gifts as prizes.

At all events, whatever you do, never sit down and say, "I can't." Suppose you can't; that's just the reason you should add, "I will"; and if you act it, the final consonant will soon drop from "I can't." Don't envy others their success; envy will do almost everything except win victories. Don't expect others to point out the thoroughfare to fame. It is only natural that hard-won success should hold its laurels high, and not care to open up a royal road to reach them. What a man has he wants to keep, especially if any one manifests a desire to get it away from him.

This reminds me of a story that I heard the last time I was in my old home town. Lije Short has not been very successful as a farmer and became a ready listener to the arguments of a socialist orator who spoke in the town hall during the last political campaign. Lije primed up on a lot of socialistic literature, became a disciple, and used to orate about his theories

of the equal division of property whenever he could get a listener. One day Lije was riding his usual hobby down in Cy Barton's store, when Clem Dawes, the State Senator, dropped in.

"So you believe all property should be equally divided?" he said.

"Cer-tainly," answered Lije, and was going on to tell why, when Clem interrupted him.

"Say, Lije," he asked, "if you had two horses would you give me one?"

"Cer-tainly," said Lije.

"And, if you had two cows, you'd give me one, I suppose, if I asked you for it?" went on Dawes.

"I would," declared Short stoutly.

"And if you had two pigs —" began Clem.

"Say, Clem Dawes," broke in Lije, "that's takin' a mean advantage. You know well enough I've got two pigs."

The good Lord gave us the idea of property accumulation, my son, for a very good reason,—to keep us from rusting. The pity of it is that all men are not



content with what they reasonably need. They are so afraid, many of them, that they will "rust out" that they forge their souls into files to penetrate into other men's strong boxes.

Again I find that my letter has taken a far different turn from what I intended. Yet my random opinions may be of value. Although my powers of expression of a thought may lack, thanks to my sex, much of the force—I am almost inclined to say brutal force—with which some writers drive home their arguments, I hope you will appreciate that my opportunities for experience and observation of the evils against which I warn you have not been limited. It is not necessary for me to give you proof of this. You have all the evidence a man of clear perception requires.

You are not like old Si Jennings, the only lawyer in my town, who had the reputation of never taking a case unless there was proof positive that he would win it. In all other cases it was his practice to advise his would-be clients to consult

Ephraim Blackwell, a lawyer in the next county whom Jennings cordially hated.

One day a farmer came to Lawyer Jennings's office and said he wanted him to bring suit against a neighbor, whose boy, he declared, had shot several of his ducks.

"So?" said Si. "But will you swear on the stand that he shot the ducks?"

"No," replied the farmer, "I did n't say that he shot 'em : I said that I suspected he shot 'em."

"Oh, well," announced Si, "I can't take such a weak case as that. Go over to the next county and get Eph Blackwell. He 'll take anything."

"But I 've got good evidence," continued the persistent client.

"Evidence? Yet you only *suspect* that the boy shot the ducks. That,"—and Si snapped his fingers,—“that for your evidence!"

"But, Mr. Jennings," insisted the farmer, "I have good reasons for my suspicion."

"Possibly, sir, possibly, but only evidence will do for *me*," was the retort.

"Waal, lawyer," drawled the farmer, "I've got *some* evidence. The boy was in my meadow lot with a gun."

"Pouf!" said Jennings.

"And I heard the gun fired."

"Stuff!" cried Si.

"And I saw the ducks fall."

"Trivial!" declared the lawyer.

"Waal," said the farmer, growing angry, "I found the ducks in the boy's game-bag. Now, good day, sir. I'm goin' over to t'other county, where folks are not so derved partic'lar."

Although, my son, it is often true that the fact that "everybody says" something is so is the only fact in the story, it is nevertheless not always wise to insist upon too much corroborative detail. Your dear father realized this quite recently, when the advertising department conceived the idea that it would be a good scheme to publish broadcast a formula of the ingredients used in one of the ready-to-eat food preparations manufactured by the House. It happened to be a particularly pure and nutritious article of diet, and the scheme

appealed to every one as most excellent. But the aftermath was disillusionizing. The trade had no sooner been supplied than letters of commendation began to arrive. This pleased your father immensely, and he was on the point of raising the advertising manager's salary, when there was a sharp turn in that gentleman's popularity. Communications commenced to pour in from all quarters reading substantially like this :

"Your formula idea is a great one. It will increase the sale of your goods tremendously. Please have your next shipment of canned meats, pâté de foie gras, devilled ham, lard, etc., etc., similarly labelled, with the list of ingredients used."

That, believe me, was the end of corroborative detail in the business.

But I must close. Your father has come home, and the noise of the outer door is evidence that it will be advisable for me to see that cook is on schedule time with the dinner. With deepest affection,

MOTHER.

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P. S.—I have arranged to have our Association for the Study of Psychic Phenomena meet at your house on the evening of your arrival home. I'm sure you and Helen will enjoy it.

M.

• THE NINTH LETTER

*Economy in the Household, and the Varying View-Points from Which Men and Women Regard It, Together with an Interesting Dog Story That may Point a Moral.*



CHICAGO, April 26, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

Rummaging through some old trunks to-day, I came across a little pair of blue kid slippers of that ancient type once known as ankle-ties. They brought the showers to my eyes for a moment, for they were yours. Your feet had toddled about in them more than twenty-five years ago. The carpet they trod was ingrain, and the rooms they could run about in were only three. That was back in old Missouri, and I was happy, indeed, for you came, and your laugh was better music than the mocking-bird's.

I say tears came to my eyes, but only for a moment did I mourn the passing of my baby. I thought at once how strong and handsome and manly he had grown, and how prone to want the nobler things of life. If you do not quite agree with



all these adjectives, remember that a mother is the one who sees the best in her son, while the father—well, you have had your father's letters to chasten you. There is not much danger that I can spoil you, and Helen is altogether too sensible to do such a thing. After all, flattery is often discreet. Make a man think he is a superior sort of fellow and he will generally be one, just to prove that your appreciation was justified. Insist that he's a cad and a fool, and he gets to believe it himself.

It was so with our old dog Taurus, and men and dogs were n't placed so very far apart by the Creator, you know. Taurus was a white bulldog whose pugnacity was the admiration of the male population of the little town where we lived. He could whip twice his weight in wild-cats, and then snap up another dog or two on his way home. Naturally his customary habitat was the dog-house.

We also owned at this period a coach-dog named Jed, and the animal had been trained to run under the wagon that your

father used to drive about through the country on business. At one particular farmhouse there always rushed out a big Newfoundland to bite and maltreat Jed, who was a woful coward, every time he passed. At last your father's none-too-elastic patience broke. He got some black paint and spotted Taurus, the bull, so that he was a very excellent prototype of a coach-dog. Then a trip was purposely taken past the farmhouse. Of course the Newfoundland came forth hilariously and landed upon Taurus for the customary biting, but he died then and there.

Your father said that Taurus was in fine spirits all the way home, putting his old enemy, the livery-stable bull, out of commission as he passed. He came into the house wagging his tail at me with pride and satisfaction. I was cleaning a large mirror at the time, and as I rested it against the wall for a moment he caught sight of himself in the guise of a coach-dog. He put his tail between his legs in a broken-hearted sort of way, slunk out into his

dog-house, and refused even chicken. His spirit was broken and he never fought again. So you see that if you give a dog a bad coat he will live up to it.

Other things your baby shoes brought back to mind,—things you cannot possibly remember, yet of which you were a great part. I mean the struggles and the self-denials and the patient toil I underwent to make your father a financial success. In one of his letters to you he told you of the early lessons he gave me in domestic economy, and I suppose you were duly impressed. I am pictured as a silly goose of a woman who could not make my household allowances meet at both ends, and who fancied that people “asked papa” whenever they wanted money.

I have always thought that your father’s vivid imagination was in a great degree responsible for his later success as a pork-packer; that in some way he really believed in the magic transformations of his cans, so that he imparted that faith to others; and now I am more convinced of it than ever. A man who could dream

that dream of our early life is a genius in the art of phantasmagoria.

Do I seem over-anxious to clear myself of this charge of pristine extravagance and folly? Well, then, you must remember that a mother wishes, first of all, to stand in a happy light before her son. The husband does not matter so much, for he knows, anyway. If he is honest, he gives credit; if he is not, his opinion does not count. But the son must get his knowledge of his mother's youth by hearsay. Shall the father be the sole source of information, then? Judge for yourself in this particular case. You know us both.

Let me tell you of one incident that will show better than any mere claims of mine the difference between your father and myself, in a matter of saving and self-denial when we were young, about as young as you and Helen are now. *En passant*, whom do you think you ought to thank that you two are not compelled to count the cost of things? Perhaps the little story will illuminate your answer.

As you know, we began our matrimonial career down in the small town of Koshkonong, Missouri. It was not a place of beauty nor a joy for even half of the time, but fate had planted us there, and, with the help of a little money given me by my father, we started a bit of a business in the line of curing and selling that essential portion of a hog's anatomy, the ham. Because of a secret I had from one of my father's old slaves as to what to use in the smoking, our hams finally achieved fame and we left old Missouri. But of that later, perhaps.

We did not flourish financially at first, and there came a time when we held a directors' meeting, your father and I, and voted that each of us was to give up some luxury for a period of six months. I chose to do without a new bonnet, and your father—who smoked in those days, no matter what he may have told you about his later life—agreed to do without tobacco.

I went bravely along through Easter and the spring weeks, wearing an old

piece of millinery that finally came to be the talk of the town and evoked from Elder Edgerly a sermon on the duty of women to be attractive. But I carried a high head and a light heart, because I knew I was playing the part of a good and economical wife.

Meantime I did n't see your father smoke at all, but I did notice a curious odor in his clothes, a smell I could n't quite put in the category of any known scents,—sort of tobaccoish, yet not. Once I asked him if he had spent any money for the luxury, and he promptly replied that not a cent was down for that purpose.

One day I happened to go over to the smoke-house to get something I thought I had left there during the winter. Opening the door suddenly, I beheld your father sitting on a keg of saltpetre, an enormous corncob pipe in his mouth, and blowing out a cloud of smoke that would have done credit to a miniature Vesuvius. He looked at me with a sickly smile, but did n't stop. I was too angry and

disheartened to cry, but my tongue was bitter enough.

"How long has this been going on?" I asked.

"Oh, every day, I guess," replied your father, still grinning.

"But I thought you said you had not been spending any money for tobacco," I cried tartly.

"Well, my dear, I have n't—that is, not as tobacco. What I've been doing is to help smoke the hams, and I've set down every cent of the cost to materials for curing. You can see that I have n't spent a single penny for tobacco, not a penny."

I said never a word, but turned on my heel and walked straight down to Miss Sniffley's and ordered the best hat she had in the store. It cost six dollars and a half. How I smile as I look at one of Celestine's bills to-day and think of that first expensive hat of mine!

And that, my dear son, is one of the ways taken by your father to teach *me* economy! It was essentially masculine and I cannot now blame him, for he is a

man, whatever his little failings. I merely want you to have the woman's side; it will help prepare you for your humdrum married life—oh, yes, that is just the word I mean, and you need not shake your head, as you used to do in your childhood days, and declare that there never was, never could be, and never will be such a girl as Helen. Helen is a dear, sweet, lovable bit of femininity, and you are a lucky fellow to have her. But—ah, well, I'll let you find out the "but" for yourself. Why should I, a woman of fifty, try to throw even the edge of an eclipse across the refulgent orb of your honeymoon?

You will learn for yourself, soon enough, that the woman who lowers her voice to ask a favor will be able to raise it when you don't grant it. There is a way, however, to prevent this sort of thing. I don't mean by giving a wife everything for which she asks. Asking sometimes grows by what it feeds on, and, if husbands adopted the "always-give-when-asked" policy with some wives, they



would eventually bring up in the poor debtors' court. But end as you begin; or, rather, begin as you mean to continue. It is a pretty poor husband who, during the honeymoon, fairly uses his wife as a target for sealskin sacks and sunbursts, and six months later raises the roof when a bill comes home for eight yards of gingham and a pair of shoes. Don't be lavish in the beginning, but fair, and keep on being fair till the end of your wedded life, and a good wife will appreciate you and be your help, not your hindrance.

I venture to say that just now you cannot do too much for Helen's comfort, and that you will not allow her to take a step that you can save her. If a man drops all this later, be sure that a wife will notice it. I don't doubt that you are so far complaisant just now that you even go shopping with your wife and bring her bundles home. You would be more than masculinely human if you kept this up; but if, in the future, you should be asked, in an emergency, to bring home a bundle, why should you refuse? Some men, who



**"You even go shopping with your wife and bring  
her bundles home."**



profess to be ashamed to be seen carrying a package home to their wives, appear absolutely proud to perambulate a crowded, well-lighted thoroughfare with burdens never purchased in a dry-goods store. Perhaps such men are like the husband of my old laundress, Mrs. Simms. Mr. Simms had not worked for fifteen years, when one day his wife secured him a place as janitor. She hurried home in great glee to tell her husband, but he did n't enthuse over it a bit. This rather nettled his wife.

"What 's the matter, Alec?" she inquired, somewhat testily. "Don't you feel equal to it?"

"Equal, Margaret!" replied that gentleman with dignity. "Equal is n't the word. I'm *superior* to it!"

To change the subject, it amuses me to have you write that, in some mysterious way, the people at the hotel where you stayed last "became wise," as you put it — though why necessarily "wise," I don't see—to the fact that you and Helen were just freshmen in the college of matri-

mony, and that you moved to another hostelry to be rid of the feeling of annoyance. Vain hope, my boy! If you and Helen love each other as you both ought, you may as well expect to conceal the mumps as the fact that you are a newly married couple. And why should you not be proud of it? Really it is envy that makes your fellow creatures look upon you youthful turtle-doves with a supercilious sort of manner.

Whatever you do, in the way of throwing the world off the scent, don't go to the lengths taken by John and Lucy Harding, a pair I used to know. They were both so excessively shy and modest that when they started on their wedding journey they took separate cars, vowing that no jeers should be hurled in their direction. This would have worked to a charm, had not the car in which Lucy rode been detached from the train and carried off into Minnesota somewhere, while John fetched up at St. Louis. It took them a week to join forces, and by that time they were so lovelorn that they

did n't care what people thought, and kissed in public in a perfectly shameless way. Just be your own natural selves, and you will come out of it with flying colors.

Plans for your house-warming are going forward at a splendid rate, and General Heath is proving himself invaluable in looking after the refreshment end of the merrymaking. He has returned from Dwight, which he says is a dull town and not worth visiting, looking so very much improved that I asked him what had wrought such a change. He replied that it must have been the good food at the Keeley House. However, he still retains his impeccable taste in the matter of drinkables, and promises that what you have shall be of the best and plenty of it. It's such a relief to have him attend to that, for your father does n't know Rhenish wine from hard cider. I will attend to the music; a string quartette, with something from Tschaikowsky and Grieg will be best, I think.

Yours with love,

MOTHER.

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P. S.—On no account let it be known that I used that absurd word “house-warming” in connection with your home-coming. Of course, it will be a reception, and we ought to get a column in the papers. The General says it will cost money, but can be arranged.

M.

## • THE TENTH LETTER

*As a Warning the Mother Shows Her Son  
that even such a Shrewd Business  
Man as His Father can be Ensnared  
by a "Promoter" with an Oily Tongue.*





CHICAGO, May 4, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

You will be surprised to hear from me so soon, especially as you have not written me since my last ; but as we are leaving to-morrow for Missouri I must acquaint you with the fact. This is because of the express orders of Dr. Maynard to your father that he give up business and go back to the old home and the old life for a time. Can you picture your father, in a pair of overalls, spading over a kitchen garden or following the furrow of a plough ? Yet that, or practically that, is what Dr. Maynard prescribes for him.

"I don't think he is a really sick man," said the doctor to me, "that is, not half as sick as he thinks he is. People seldom are. But he must have complete rest from figuring up profits."

I might have added "and losses," but

it would hardly be right to let even as old a friend as the doctor know that your father has recently been taken in by as smooth a swindler as ever built air-castles in the Board of Trade. I shouldn't even tell you, but that I feel it my duty; for when you know that even as shrewd a man as the head of the House can be buncoed—I believe that term just expresses it—you will not be so likely to imagine yourself immune from the infection of glib talkers who “promote” things. There's nothing that so quickly takes the conceit out of a man who believes that he bears a charmed life, as to find that the comrade who stands shoulder to shoulder with him in the ranks is not bullet-proof.

It all happened from one of the letters of introduction against which your father has so often warned you. It appears that he does give them sometimes; that is, when it seems of business advantage to him to do so. It is said that the clever swindler was, as is altogether natural, from New York. His scheme, as he put

it, was to "revolutionize the freight business" and he had elaborate drawings, specifications, plans, models, and Patent Office documents to show for it.

Your father has been so reticent since the bubble exploded that, although I have asked repeated questions, I have secured very little information. From other sources, however, I learned that the proposition involved doing away with railroad tracks, making it possible for goods to be unloaded direct from the cars into warehouses or stores. Smaller cars than those now employed were to be built of such light material that the electric motive power would be reduced to a minimum.

The idea was immensely captivating, it is said, but while the financial returns promised were enormous the necessary capital was equally so. This is where the pivot of the promoter's scheme rested. No man would undertake the gigantic outlay single-handed, and your father was asked simply to be one of ten men to subscribe the capital stock, for it was the

plan to keep the control in the hands of a close corporation.

"I don't know how practical your idea is," your father is reported to have said, "because it's out of my line. If it's what you say it is, you may count me in."

From that moment the promoter did count him in.

"I will send you to a friend in whose technical knowledge I have the greatest confidence," said your father, or something like it. Then he wrote a letter to Professor Erasmus Brown, beginning "This will introduce to you," and explaining what he wanted to find out — namely, whether the inventions were practical.

Off went the promoter, and returned a day or two later with the information that Prof. Brown had taken documents and models and would make a report shortly. Then he asked another favor. As he did not wish to lose time, would your father recommend to him some other Chicago man whom he would like to have associated with him in the com-

pany? The other eight capitalists, explained the financial hypnotist, were to be from other cities.

As your Uncle Henry had, not long before, taken sides with your father in a little argument about you that we had at dinner, he felt especially grateful to him and determined to "let him in on a good thing." So he wrote him a note, without, however, committing himself to any opinion as to the merits of the plan.

The promoter went away, and that was the last your father saw of him. The next chapter was when he met your uncle one day, about a week later, on the Board of Trade.

"Well," said your uncle, "how's that company getting along?"

"What company?" asked your father.

"Why, that simplified traction affair, —the railless freight-car company, you know," explained Uncle Henry.

"Is there a company?" queried your father, casually. "I did n't know it had gone as far as that."

"Gone as far as that!" cried your

uncle. "Why, man, what are you talking about?"

Then they fell into a wrangle that, as your uncle expresses it, "almost made the Board of Trade adjourn for the day at 1:30." The discussion ended by your father going to Uncle Henry's office, where he produced from a pigeonhole a letter, which, after date and formal address, read as follows:

"DEAR HENRY :

"This will introduce Mr. John J. Blood, who wishes to direct your attention to a business proposition, the details of which he will explain to you, as he has to me. While you know that I am not inclined to engage in any enterprise outside of my own business, yet this particular idea appeals to me with especial force, inasmuch as the operation of the plan would free me from the exactions of the railroads. You, of course, will judge for yourself as to the probabilities, but in so far as the money for expenses is concerned, you may advance it and hold me responsible."

Your father was staggered. "I never wrote such a letter!" he exclaimed.

Your uncle did not know what to make of him. "Is n't it your writing?" he asked.

"Y-e-s, it looks like it," admitted your father, dubiously.

"And it's written on that dinky double-sheet private paper that you affect," continued your uncle.

"Y-e-s," admitted your father. "Well, Henry, how much did you let him have?"

Your uncle would not tell me the sum. "There ought to be some honor among brothers-in-law as well as among thieves," he said, with a chuckle. I know he refused to tell me only "to stimulate my imagination," as he has said on other occasions, but I'm sure it was a large amount.

The mystery was explained when it was found that Prof. Brown had received no plans and no instructions from your father. The gentleman from New York had simply torn the second half-sheet from



your father's letter to the professor and deftly united it to the first half-sheet of his note to your uncle; the clause "in so far as the money for expenses is concerned, you may advance it and hold me responsible" having been intended to assure the professor of reimbursement for his trouble.

It is evident that Mr. John J. Blood is very like a shiftless family I knew when a girl. They were forever borrowing things, and the better luck they had, the worse off they seemed to be. One day, I remember, Lucy, the eldest daughter, came to my mother at the kitchen window.

"My mother 'd like to borrow a d-d-dozen eggs," she said.

"What's she want 'em for?" asked my mother. "Going to have company?"

"N-n-no," stuttered Lucy. (Who ever saw a shiftless family without one child that stuttered?) "She w-w-wants to set a h-h-hen."

"A hen?" said ma. "Where 'd your folks get a hen?"

"We hain't, but ma c-c-can b-b-borrow one," replied the girl.

"Well, here 's the eggs, Lucy," smiled my mother, as she passed her the basket. "S'pose your ma 'll make the hen provide the nest?"

I wonder who provided the nest for Mr. Blood? It would scarcely do to ask your father. Your uncle is not so scrupulous. The other night, as I was passing the library, I overheard your father say to him: "Look here, Hen, is n't it about time to let that thing drop?" He must have had very little satisfaction from your uncle's reply, which was: "Why, John, have n't you always told me never to let go of a good thing on a falling market?"

I fancy your pa was complaining of the extremely pointed story Henry had told at dinner. Some one mentioned the prohibition law in Iowa and this started your uncle.

"Speaking of prohibition," he said, "I remember a funny incident down in South Paris, Maine, when I was on the road."

"Let 's hear it, Hen," urged your

father, who is very fond of your uncle's stories when they are not aimed at himself. He had no reason to suspect this one from Maine.

"Well," said your uncle, "I was in the village store the evening I spent in South Paris, when a long-legged chap sidled in and edged his way up to the counter, where the proprietor was weighing sugar and something else—sand, I guess—and putting it into bags.

" 'Say, Seth,' said the elongated wish-bone, 'tell ye what I'll do. I'll treat the crowd ter egg-nog if you'll put in the milk, sugar, and eggs.'

"The storekeeper's eyes twinkled. 'Have ye—' and the rest of his speech was in the fence-rail's ear.

" 'A whole quart!' said that individual, boastfully. The proprietor's face lit up like a jack o' lantern, for prohibition prohibited that year in South Paris, as the wrong man had somehow been elected sheriff. 'All right,' he replied, 'I'll go down cellar an' get the milk.'

"As he disappeared down the ladder,

the much-drawn-out person rushed to the door, opened it, and called 'It's all right, Jed.'

"Then in came a roly-poly little chap who seemed all muffler and wristers. 'He'll do it, Sam?' he asked.

"'Sure's shootin',' said Sam. 'Say, Bill, git down a bowl, will yer?' this to the store boy, who climbed up on some shelves and produced a yellow mixing bowl.

"The grocery man came up and poured a quart of milk into the bowl. Bill broke a half-dozen eggs into the liquid. One of the loungers grated nutmeg. Another brought a pinch of some other spice. A third added sugar, while a fourth stirred.

"'Now where's the stuff?' asked the storekeeper of the attenuated one. At this the wristers moved, a bottle appeared, and its contents were poured into the bowl.

"'Get the mugs,' said the elongated Sam, and several ran to do his bidding. Just as the storekeeper had filled a mug, Sam held out his hand. The storekeeper seemed struck by a sudden idea.

“ ‘Look a’ here, Sammy Longlegs,’ he said, ‘yer’ve pervided nothin’, done nothin’, —where do you come in for fust drink?’ ”

“ ‘Oh,’ said Sam, grinning, ‘I’m the promoter.’ ”

Everybody roared as your uncle finished, except your father. “That old chestnut!” was all he said, but I knew by the way he looked he’d never heard it before. He’s naturally death on promoters just now.

To speak seriously, I really think your father needs the rest. If he can only bring himself to spend a few months close to the soil, it will do him a world of good, and may help to spare him to us for many years. Dirt is a mighty good thing if it’s the right kind of dirt, and not devitalized by a city’s smoke and gloom. Yet even in the city we are altogether too afraid of nature. We are certainly foolishly timorous about air. Modern science seems to figure that we cannot draw a long breath without inhaling a germ.

Why, I read the other day that the nursery in a millionaire’s home was under

constant medical supervision, that it was fumigated daily, and that the toys were disinfected morning and night. If the poor little children that live this sort of sterilized life grow into a manhood and womanhood worth having it will be a wonder. When the world gets so scientific that we can't do a natural, spontaneous action without taking a specific for some Latin disease, I don't want to be here.

Your father has sent for me to come and help finish his packing, so I must end this rambling effusion. In haste, but devotedly,

MOTHER.

P. S.—You would smile if you saw the clothes your father has selected for his rural life. One would think he had never seen the country, instead of having been born fourteen miles from a highroad and living there till after he was twenty-one. He somehow reminds me of the farmer's boy who went to college, and when he came home asked his father what was the

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name of the rake that was lying at his feet. Just then, you remember, he stepped on the rake and it flew up and hit him in the head. You do not need to be told in what words he proved that he had suddenly recovered his memory.

M.

• THE ELEVENTH LETTER

*The Associations of Early Life in a Missouri Village are Renewed by the Father and Mother with Disillusionizing if Somewhat Mirth-Provoking Results.*





KOSHKONONG, MISSOURI, May 23, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

Here we are at last, planked in this flat, hot, steamy green section of the glorious State of Missouri, twelve miles from a railroad station, but only ten rods from a saloon. It seems impossible to believe that here is the Garden of Eden of our first months of marriage, yet the old familiar lack of landscape proclaims it to be so.

Over yonder is the sluggish creek where catfish and mud-turtles still disport themselves as in the days of old. Across on a little hillock, I see the selfsame building in which your father first began branching out for himself as a maker of sausages and a packer of salt pork. It has become a negro Baptist church now, and the very first day we arrived, a deputation of deacons called upon your father and requested a donation, on the ground that

they had given sanctity to his old shop, and on the further ground that he could afford it. He would n't give money, but promised to send a full line of samples of the House's canned goods to the pastor as soon as he went home. I am not sure whether this is encouraging piety or not.

We are still in the village proper, or improper, if you please, boarding for a few days with Miss Eunice, daughter of that good old Elder Edgerly I have often told you about. The Elder is still alive, but very old and in his dotage. He sits in a big chintz-covered chair and laps his chops continually when he is deprived of his pet solace, chewing-tobacco. He thinks your father and I are young and just married, and cracks very unclerical jokes on the subject of our coming honeymoon that are decidedly embarrassing to me, although your father haw-haws at the very worst of them. I am afraid this getting back to the soil will give his acquired refinement a very bad rub. If you find it off altogether when he gets back, do not blame me.

Let me give you a sample of the old man's humor, and you will understand how hard it is for me to forbear with him. We were all at supper last night—and a very good supper, too, with fried chicken, yams, beaten biscuit, and milk—when all at once the toothless Elder looked quizzically from your father to me, and from me to your father again, and said :

“Ye do look purty old and scraggly to be jest married, now, don't ye? But youngsters ain't what they was in my day ; no, siree. But ye can kinder make it up through yer children—when ye get 'em, he—he !”

“Why,” said I in a moment of I know not what fatuousness, “I have one already—a fine, splendid boy of twenty-seven.”

“Ye hev, hev ye?” reflected the Elder, with a sly look in his faded old eyes. “And ye ain't told any one all this time? He—he—he ! ho—ho—ho ! You're a smart un, you are.” And I thought the venerable man would tear the little breath out of his body, he laughed so. I am sorry to say your father slapped me on the back

and thought it the funniest thing he had heard since General Heath told him he was about to don the blue ribbon.

But there is some diversion here, after all. For instance, court sat Saturday in the same old dirty-yellow building with dirtier white pillars that your father knew years ago in connection with his first bankruptcy. But none of all the former officials now occupies a place in this peculiar temple of justice, and I am rather glad of it, although probably nobody would remember us for the poor and struggling young couple who used to sell them ham and sausages ; and if they did, they would be too overawed by our present moneyed appearance to remind us of it.

Well, as I inferred, we attended a session of the court yesterday, and it was well worth while. The presiding judge was a queer little man, sallow of skin, and with straight black hair that fell over his ears and nearly to his shoulders. He wore immense eye-glasses pinched on the end of his long nose, and chewed tobacco

valiantly. The case was all about a man charged with stealing a hog, and that, of course, enlisted your father's interest at once. He seemed to be for the defendant, too, although the matter looked rather grave against him. The two learned counsel were funny extremes of humankind, one, Colonel Blount, being very tall, very fat, and smooth-shaven, while his opponent, Major Hardee, was small, thin, wiry, and properly bewhiskered.

I can't begin to tell you all the amusing things that happened in the great legal battle, which was very violent and sanguinary in tone. At one point Colonel Blount happened to let fall some remote hint as to the undesirability of Major Hardee's countenance. The little fire-eater was on his feet in an instant.

"Yo' Honah," he shouted angrily, "my learned brother has found fault with my features, suh. Now I would like to know, suh, how he would have me look."

Colonel Blount smiled as sweetly as though he were at another sort of bar. He fairly beamed on his enemy.

"Yo' Honah," he said calmly, "my learned brother asks me, suh, how I would have him look. Well, suh, I would have him look as he ought if he could; I would have him look as he cannot if he would; in short, suh, I would have him look like an honest man."

Of course, Major Hardee was furious with passion, and I did not know but hostilities would be in order right there. In fact, as the Major reached in his hip pocket for his handkerchief, your father made a curious ducking motion toward the floor, but recovered himself quickly.

His Honor pounded and stamped, while a thin line of dark fluid trickled out from a corner of his mouth. But he could n't stop Major Hardee.

"I'll fight yo', suh, at thirty paces," he cried.

Colonel Blount looked at the attorney in an injured sort of way.

"That, suh, I maintain, is an unfair proposition, suh. The diff'rence in our sizes makes it unjust. Yo' are so small that I might fire at yo', suh, a dozen

times without hitting yo' once, while I am so big you might shoot me at the first fire, suh ! ”

Major Hardee looked thoughtful for a moment, as if the justice of the thing appealed to him. Then he replied :

“ To convince yo', suh, that I do not want to take any advantage of yo', I will make this proposition, suh. Yo' shall chalk my size on yo' body, and all hits outside the ring shall not be counted, suh.”

Everybody roared at this, except the funny little judge, who suddenly awoke to the impression that the dignity of the court was being imposed upon. He pounded savagely on his desk, emitted a huge mouthful of tobacco-juice (oh, I am so thankful that you adopted cigarettes instead of this vile habit of chewing !), and pitched upon Major Hardee as the object of his displeasure.

“ Majah, I have a great mind to fine yo' for contempt of co't, suh. Yo' have been trifling with the justice of this coun-try, suh. I said I thought I 'd fine yo',



suh, but on second thoughts, I believe I 'll commit yo', suh."

Major Hardee bowed till his whiskers swept the clerk's table below the bench.

"That is at yo' Honah's discretion, suh," he replied. "But I 'll tell yo' Honah frankly that if yo' Honah commits me, it will not be the worst thing yo' Honah has committed."

I fully expected to see His Honor come down from the bench and assail the lawyer, but instead of that, he grinned amicably and immediately declared a recess of the court for a few minutes. The last I saw of the trio—the judge, Major Hardee, and Colonel Blount—they were walking arm in arm up the steps of the saloon I mentioned a while ago. It seems that these little incidents are thought nothing of down here, and that the most violent animosities of the court-room are generally healed at the bar—the other kind, I mean. Your father says that stock-yard fights are sometimes patched up in the same way.

Last evening, to bring back the touch of the vanished years as fully as possible,

we went to prayer-meeting in the same little old church where we worshipped the Lord as completely as Cupid would permit during our courtship, and where we went to Sabbath services twice a day after we were married. Ah, the fervor of that old devotion, how it has wasted itself through the churches of Michigan Avenue !

Are we really less religious now, or is the golden memory of youth sufficient to make consecration, like everything else, seem more glorious? I asked your father that, though in a rather different way, you can imagine, but got no comfort from him. He merely replied that he had been under an awful handicap as a pork-packer, and that if his religion had somehow oozed away from him, it had n't, at any rate, got into any of the cans, so far as he knew. Said his motto was, "Render unto the lard pail the things that are the lard pail's," and that even that had to be stretched occasionally.

We sat in the old pew, as hard and ungraceful and quaint as of yore, with the

same two little wooden foot-rests covered with queer old red ingrain carpet, and the same dog-eared old hymnals in the rack in front. Do these things never wear out, or does life go so slowly down in this odd corner of Missouri that time has no destructive friction? I think I shall write a paper on "The Indestructibility of the Hideous" for our club, when I return to Chicago.

I say we sat in the familiar and hallowed pew, but not for long, because the minister's talk was most unfortunate. He had heard of us, of course, and, I am afraid, not to our advantage. He evidently regarded your father as a representative of a great and wicked Babylon, who had become repentant and come to his early home to seek balm in Gilead. This he proceeded to administer by preaching on the text, "He calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." I am compelled to admit that he grew quite abusive toward the money power and pork monopolies, and I scarcely

blame your father when, after ten minutes of the harangue, he arose and stalked out, dragging me with him.

"I could have stood the donkey's braying," he said to me outside, "if he had compared me to anything but a sheep. Mutton! Bah!"

You may think that we are not pursuing our original intent—the improving of your father's health by farm work—but we are coming to it very soon. You see here in the village there is no real opportunity for your father to indulge in that sort of recreation without making what he calls a "holy show" of himself. Why, he would have the whole settlement out in a jiffy if it became known that the "pig-sticking plutocrat," as some local wit has already named him, could be seen working in the fields. So we have hit upon a happy solution of the problem.

Your Uncle Silas, of whom you have heard me speak, I think, owns a farm about four miles away, and we are going out there to-morrow—that is, if we can get away from the town without being

followed. As it is now, your father cannot go as far as from the Elder's to the saloon without making of himself the head of a long comet, the tail being composed of black and white youngsters of various ages, and all shouting lustily for some of our money, which, of course, they do not get.

There was one exception, though, but he was a great deal older. In fact, he was a venerable darkey who ambled up to your father in front of the court-house, pulled off his battered hat, and bowed low about a dozen times.

"How yo' do, Marse?" he chuckled. "I'se partic'lar glad to see yo' back heah, lookin' like a nagob dat's reekin' wid de gold, huh—huh."

"Don't believe I know you, my son," said your father.

"Don' know ole Sam, dat use ter 'sist in de town slaughter-house? Don' member de time de cross-eyed man was a gwine ter kill de bull, an' yo' objected wid great stren'osity?"

"Ah, I do remember you, Sam. But



"How yo' do, Marse,—I'se particlar glad to see  
yo' back heah."



I don't recall the story. What is it?"

"Well, sah, yo' was a young helper in de slaughter-house, an' one day dar came a man an' an ole black bull ter kill. Yo' 'sisted to git de critter's head down ter de floor by de rope and ring, an' was a-gwine ter hol' de critter's horns so he could n't wobble. Well, yo' had 'em good an' tight, an' de man he stood up an' raised de sledge-hammer ter gib de bull one 'tween de eyes, when jes' den yo' glanced up an' saw dat de man was cross-eyed.

"'Is yo' a-gwine ter hit whar yo' look?' says yo'.

"'I sart'nly is,' says de cross-eyed man.

"'Den yo' hol' dis bull yerself; I won't,' says yo', an' yo' did n't nuther, though de boss fired yo' fer 'subord'nation.'

I have n't seen your father so pleased for a long time. He shook the aged darkey's hand heartily and left something there that caused the ancient negro to start for the saloon immediately. I asked your father why he gave him money, and he said it was because Sam was the first man



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who had treated him like a human being since he had arrived,—declared he was weary of the golden-calf business. I hope he will not get any at Uncle Silas's.

Your loving

MOTHER.

P. S.—We have changed our plans and are going out to Uncle Silas's after dark to-night. News of our intended hegira to-morrow had become current. Your father threatened to shoot the livery man if he breathed a word about this evening's trip.

M.

• THE TWELFTH LETTER

*The Shadow of Commercialism Lowers  
over the Family's Country Enjoy-  
ment, but, It Seems, does not Ma-  
terially Affect Their Mirth-Inspiring  
Experiences.*



EAST KOSHKONONG, Mo., June 8, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I am very sorry to say that the improvement in your father's health, for which we all hoped, does not seem to result from his rural sojourn. The main trouble appears to be that he does not, as Dr. Maynard expected he would, keep business out of his head.

Although the orders he gave that no letters or telegrams were to be sent to him have been obeyed, and he has not sought to revoke them, yet I am of the opinion that he devotes most of his time to speculating as to what is going on in the House. I thought I was doing for the best, but perhaps I made a mistake when I told him you had cut your wedding journey short and had taken personal charge of the business. At all events, the news did n't seem to give

him the peace of mind that I expected it would.

But, as he promised to dismiss business, he keeps his word. Still, there are unmistakable signs to one who has watched him as many years as I have, that show which way his thoughts tend. The other morning before breakfast, for instance, I could n't find him anywhere. Finally your Aunt Martha opened the buttery door and there he stood, with her spring scales, weighing a ham. "Just to keep my hand in," he muttered, with a rather shamefaced look, as he came out.

Then again, your uncle says that your father has the most consuming interest in the cows. He goes to see them early in the morning and at night, and the past week he has taken upon himself the duty of driving them to and from pasture. I thought this excellent exercise for him and that the exertion would tend to stir his blood and clear his brain of financial cobwebs. But your Cousin Ned, who accompanied your father the other day to

help drive the cows, tells a curious story which somewhat disconcerts me.

"Uncle John kept a-talking to himself all the way," he said.

When I asked him what about, he said he did n't make out much.

"It was something about twenty-seven—fat cattle—into lower pen," explained Ned. "And then he said a lot o' figures at so much a pound, and so many dollars for the by-products or somethin' like that."

It will be plain enough to you that every time your father drives those cows to pasture he figures them into the business. Well, I suppose it is harmless amusement, although it certainly proves how careful a young man should be not to allow every interest of his life to become indissolubly connected with his commercial pursuits.

I forgot to tell you, in my last, of the embarrassment your father caused me and himself the night we arrived here. In the country, of course, the dinner hour is at noon, and the meal to which we sat down was supper. Although it was

abundant enough, it was not dinner, and your father seemed to notice it, despite the fact that ever since the train passed outside of the Chicago city limits he has been curiously preoccupied.

I don't know whether I wrote you that our cook who had been with us so many years, left us about two months ago, to get married. (I notice that all good cooks do get married, sooner or later.) We have had I don't know how many candidates for her place, but without success. I think this fact helped to reconcile your father to leaving home. But at the supper at your uncle's to which I refer, the difficulties in our cuisine seemed to become very real to him.

He was trying to cut a piece of cold corned beef (which, by the way, he hates, as he was brought up on it) with a rather dull knife. Suddenly he looked up, pushed his plate away, and said to me, in a tone that was clearly audible all over your uncle's dining-room: "Well, wife, I guess we've struck another cussed bad cook."

Your aunt colored to the roots of her hair, and her two daughters, who help her with the household duties, looked at each other and acted as if they were about to leave the table. I was struck dumb with chagrin for a moment, and then the ridiculous side of the situation struck me, and I burst out into the biggest laugh I've had since the day you came home with your eye blacked and your clothes torn and soiled, and admitted you had been in a fight with the school bully. I was provoked at you, but distressed as well, for you were a pitiable object.

"Whom did you fight with?" I asked.

"Tom Green," you replied.

"And he—he whipped you, I perceive," I exclaimed, mentally trying to make choice of one of several modes of punishment.

"Oh, did he?" you answered, as you stood at the window. "Come here a minute, mother." I went to the window and you pointed to the street. "There's Tom Green now."

I looked and burst into uncontrollable



merriment. I'm certain *you* remember how Tom Green looked. I can laugh at the recollection, even now.

Well, my laugh eased the situation at your uncle's supper-table a bit, and when I could control myself enough to speak I explained our difficulty with our cooks, and referred to your father's frequent attacks of absent-mindedness. The fact remained, however, that he had been dissatisfied with the food, and had said so. I saw that my own laughter would never save the day, and determined to try and make your uncle's folks laugh with me.

We had waited an hour or more in a little station at a railroad junction on our way to Koshkonong and your father had paced up and down the whole time smoking. This recalled a story. The original was about an Englishman, but I fancied it would be best to put your father in as the hero of it, in order to turn the laugh upon him and even matters. So I went ahead.

"He is so absent-minded," I repeated.  
"You'd never believe what he did the

other day. We had to wait at Barlow's Junction an hour, you know, on our way to Koshkonong, and it rained part of the time. John, who was smoking on the platform, came into the little waiting-room where I was sitting alone, and continued his walk, still smoking, and not paying any attention to me. By and by the station agent came in and spoke to my husband, calling his attention to the 'No Smoking' sign.

"'What harm does it do?' said my husband.

"'Why,' said the station master, 'that lady might object.'

"'What lady? Where? I don't see any lady,' said John.

"'That lady, there,' persisted the station master, pointing at me.

"'Oh, that lady!' replied my husband. 'Never mind her.'

"'But,' insisted the railroad man, 'she might *object*, sir.'

"My husband stopped in his walk, and said loudly: 'Object? Object, sir? She *can't* object. She's my wife, sir!'"

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This restored the general equilibrium, although your father looked at me as if he thought I had gone crazy to conjure up such a cock-and-bull story about him. But he said nothing, and I explained later that I did it to cover up his breach of etiquette.

"Well, they should n't salt down bull beef," was his only comment.

The joke was n't over yet, it appeared, for next morning we had the corned beef in hash for breakfast. Your Uncle Silas appeared to be all puckery about the mouth, as he watched your father eat the hash. Finally he spoke.

"Waal, John, seems as how yer like the corned beef better when it's chopped fine."

Your father had slept well and was willing to make concessions. "It's very nice," he said.

"I told Marthy and the gals they 'd better use it up somehow," said Silas. "It's nearly gone, thank the Lord."

As he spoke, he reached down beside his chair and placed on the table—but

you will guess the rest. Of course it was canned corned beef, and with the label that haunts us in our dreams.

I must give your father credit for arising to the emergency. He not only joined in the laugh with a heartiness which it did me good to hear, but he made a little speech, in which he admitted that the joke was on him, and said that he would square accounts by making each member of the household a present as soon as his order could reach the city and be delivered.

"All right, John," spoke up Silas, who was evidently bound to have the last word, "as long as you don't give us anything you make yourself."

Your Uncle Silas is a merry old man, and he, I feel, will do much toward cheering up your father. Despite the fact that more than half a century of farming has hardened him up till he looks like a pine-knot, he finds a place somewhere for the milk of human kindness and good-nature. He seems to be full of stories; at all events, they're always running over. As

the only paper that he ever sees is an agricultural journal, he cannot have read them. Perhaps he is just a natural romancer, who, if he had happened to have an education, would have been another Chauncey Depew.

A peculiar feature of his stories is that they all happened to himself, or to some neighbor. One, which particularly pleased your father, dates back to just after the Civil War. Perhaps you would like to tell it at the club, for you will scarcely care to regale your friends all the time with reflections upon how magnificent it is to be married. At all events, I'll write it out for you as nearly as Silas told it as I can.

"An old neighbor o' mine," he began, "Jud Jorkins, down the road from here a piece, was purty short o' hands the fust hayin' he did arter the war. Jud's dead an' gone now. Went through Antietam and Gettysburg and the rest, and a couple o' years arter Lee surrendered killed himself with an old musket that exploded when he tried to shoot a crow.

“Waal, as I was a-sayin’, Jud was short o’ hands, an’ he tuk ’bout anybody as come along. Mustered-out soldiers was purty thick in them days, an’ as Jud ’d been in the army he kinder cottoned to ’em. Had a lot of ’em helpin’ git in his hay. He was a tremendous time a-doin’ of it though, an’ I thought he must ’a’ forgotten how, he was in the war so long. I was a-drivin’ by his place one day an’ saw him sittin’ down under a tree, an’ stopped ter chat with him.

“‘Got some soldiers a-helpin’ of ye, ain’t yer, Jud?’ I asked.

“‘Yes, Silas, I hev,’ he said.

“‘Good workers, I reckon?’ said I.

“‘Y-e-s,’ said he, ‘some of ’em. Yer see that tall chap? He ’s a good worker. He was a private.’

“‘So?’ says I.

“‘Yep,’ he answered. ‘Those two fellers near him, they work well. One was a corporal, t’ other a private. Those other three, over there, lyin’ down under that haystack, two of ’em was captains, t’ other feller was a major.’

“‘Got your hay mos’ in?’ I said, as I clucked to the mare.

“‘Yes,’ said Jud. ‘It ’d been in long ago but fer—say, Si, don’t yer ever hire no *gen’rals*.’”

Well, my boy, I must end this letter. I never tell your father that I am writing to you, for fear he will feel a desire to send you instructions about the business. Last night I woke suddenly and found him sitting up, with the clothes wrapped around him. What do you think he was saying? Well, this was it :

“I thought I told you, Mulligan, that nothing must be thrown away. The only waste material in a steer is his claws, and that ’s because he has n’t got any.”

To-morrow I ’m going to try and interest him in another direction. I ’m going to invite all the girls in the neighborhood to a strawberry festival—not the church kind, but one on your Uncle Si’s front lawn. Your father is rather interested in young women, I notice. The other day your pretty cousin, Ruth, when she appeared in a new hat which she could n’t quite decide was

becoming to her, burst out with : " If I could only see myself as others see me ! "

Your father looked at her with a smile, and said : " Would n't do, young woman ; it might make you too conceited. "

Speaking of conceit, if Helen ever cooks anything, praise it, and, above all, eat it, if it kills you. You might as well be dead as murder your home happiness.

With greatest love,

MOTHER.

P. S.—You just ought to see me in a sun-bonnet. I wore one yesterday for the first time. Your father met me at the dairy door soon after I put it on. Will you believe it ? He actually put his arms about my neck and gave me a real good hard kiss.

M.





• THE THIRTEENTH LETTER

*The Vicissitudes of Agriculture and Angling, when Their Duties are Assumed after Years of Other Pursuits, are most Entertainingly Herein Set forth.*



LAUREL GROVE FARM,  
EAST KOSHKONONG, MO.,  
June 14, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

I 've been wondering to-day why they ever called this agricultural estate " Laurel Grove Farm," for there is n't a laurel tree within fifty miles of it, I 'm sure, and the only grove I have seen is a clump of cottonwoods down by a sluggish creek that cuts the farm in two. I asked your Uncle Silas if he named it.

" Lord bless ye, no, gal !" the jolly old soul replied. " Ef I 'd 'a' had any nam-in' ter do—which I never thought on, as long 's I 've been here—I 'd 'a' called it ' Razorback Ranch ' or sumthin' practical. 'T was my son Ned's wife that did the christ'ning. She used ter tend the corset counter in a store at Sedalia, an' is reel romantic." I could easily believe that, for her eldest hopeful, a red-haired, freckle-

faced little tyrant of ten, rejoices in the appellation of Reginald Launcelot. Of him and his deeds of darkness more anon.

I spoke of the creek a moment ago. After this morning's breakfast, in which, at last, no canned meats figured, nothing would satisfy your father but to go down to the stream and angle for catfish, as he did when he was a boy. He said it would do his rheumatism more good than all the Hot Springs in America or all the Baden-Badens in the world, besides being a heap cheaper. It was cheaper, indeed, for it cost but four cents, paid Reginald for angleworms extracted by him from their native soil.

I went with your father, at his expressed desire, to see him pull out the biggest catfish in Southern Missouri. We sat under the cottonwood trees for some time, I battling with mosquitoes and he raising his hook gently up and down, all to no purpose. At last there was a tug, your father gave a mighty pull, something fell off the hook, which flew up convulsively as your father tumbled over on his back, and,

swirling through the air, caught my hat off my head and deposited it in the middle of the muddy creek, where it was soaked and ruined in a moment.

It was my handsomest spring hat, for which I paid Celestine forty-five dollars, and I felt quite put out about it. And do you know, your father stoutly maintained that it was my fault, and that I ought to have worn the sun-bonnet instead! However, he did n't fish any more, but came up to the barnyard to examine Uncle Silas's pigs.

When I saw the animals in their pens, I realized the justice of your Uncle Silas's remark that he would have called the farm "Razor-back Ranch," for a thinner and more disconsolate set of hogs it has never been my lot to behold. Your father, of course, seized the chance to point a moral and adorn a tale. Getting a can of sausage from his travelling bag, he called the family out to the pen and proceeded :

"Here," he said, "you see what brains and capital can do. I take such ill-con-

ditioned hogs as these," pointing to the sty, "and turn them into such excellent products as I hold in my hand," displaying the can.

Everybody seemed duly impressed, except little Reginald Launcelot.

"Huh!" observed that precocious child, "I don't call that much, Uncle Johnny,"—he *will* call him "Johnny," much as it appears to bother your father. "You see we *can* eat these here pigs when we kill 'em, but the stuff in the cans makes us all sick."

Your father muttered something about an "impudent pup who did n't understand the first principles of business," but he had no more to say about Uncle Silas's swine.

I am sorry still to have to report that your father is n't gaining from his life in the country as I hoped he would. He complains that he is n't getting sleep enough, and I bear him out in that assertion. The first morning here we were awakened at four by the unearthly crowing of Uncle Silas's roosters, chanting

their orisons as if another day was never to be born. No sooner had they ceased than the noise of the people stirring about the house broke in, and then came the hoarse jangling of the cowbells as the cattle were driven off to pasture. After that Nero, the dog, barked for an hour, and by the time he had finished, sleep had flown away for good and all.

Let me advise you, my son, if you want to take a rest cure, never go into the country for it, for morning peace is impossible on a farm. Hire a room in the top of the most populous hotel in the most crowded portion of Chicago, and you will get what you seek. I think that where men are most, there 't is the quietest. The good folk on the farm here cannot understand us. They go to bed at eight o'clock and obtain all the sleep they need by four next morning. We try it, and toss wretchedly until twelve before our eyes close. We must be made anew before we can adapt ourselves to East Koshkonong.

When the shadows fell last evening,



your father wanted to go to the barn with the others and milk one of the cows. It is his pleasure to believe that, as he once was a farmer, he can still perform all the country tasks as well as ever, and I humor him in it because it takes his mind off his little infirmities.

So I pretended great pleasure as I saw him sit down beside old Jess, one of the gentlest of the cows, and begin to woo her udders. By main force, he did manage to wring some milk from the animal, when all at once one of her hind feet flashed in the air, caught the pail a tremendous thump, and sent the milk flying all over your father's face and down his neck. Uncle Silas looked on with roars of laughter, just as if he had expected the catastrophe from the first.

"What was the trouble?" I ventured to ask, after your father had wiped the milk from his face and made his neck as comfortable as possible.

"Nuthin' *very* partic'lar," returned your uncle, still gleeful, "except that John set down on the left side of old Jess, an' she,

bein' a well-bred cow, would n't stand no nonsense o' that sort."

"Why did n't you tell me?" growled your father, inclined to be resentful toward his brother.

"Why did n't I tell ye?" returned Silas. "'Cause I read onc't in one of your letters to my boy Ned, that ef a feller had n't sense 'nough ter dew a thing right, he ought ter be allowed ter dew it wrong jest so's ter show him what a blamed fool he was. So I cal'lated I'd give ye a dose of yer own medicine."

I must say that I do not believe these agricultural pursuits are just the thing your father needs. I think he is better off at Chicago bossing Mulligan, and keeping an eye on you to see that you do not use a two-cent stamp belonging to the House on your personal correspondence. Take yesterday afternoon, for instance. He was possessed by the idea that he ought to hold the plough once more, and as your Uncle Silas had a piece of pasture land that he wanted turned over, he agreed to let your father do it. Of course, I had

to go forth to witness the act, for your father is bound to show me all his accomplishments in the way of farming. Reginald Launcelot came too, and when I saw him I was afraid that the result would not be happy.

When the horses and the plough were put into position for the start, Reginald Launcelot produced a belt which he advised your father to put on. Then he fastened it with a strap to the cross-bar of the implement. This, he explained, was to help steady the plough and to make the whole operation much easier. Your father grasped the handles, the horses started, and the plough began to tear up a furrow in the ground. Your father swayed to and fro considerably, and I am afraid I saw maledictions upon his lips whenever the ploughshare struck a stone, which was not infrequently.

But things went passably well until, from some then unknown cause—but which I now begin to divine—the horses started up on a frantic run, dragging the bumping plough along with them in their

crazy course. Being fastened by the strap your father, naturally enough, went too. He could n't let go, and on he flew, his legs taking enormous strides, his coat-tails waving in the air, and I in an agony of fear lest he be killed.

But of course he was n't. The fates that watch over little children and foolish men ordained that a big rock should be in the way of the flying horses. The plough struck it and stopped suddenly. The shock broke the strap that bound your father, Ixion-like, to the thing, and after turning a double somersault in the air he landed in a clay-pit, none the worse except for his clothes and the damage to his pride.

But I thought he would do violence to somebody when, last evening after supper, young Reginald Launcelot, on being asked to "speak a piece," said the only thing he knew was "Speed the Plough."

You, who know your father so well from the intimate acquaintance of the packing plant, will understand fully that these violent jars his temper has received are in

no wise conducive to his complete recovery. Another one came last night, and I can hardly blame him for the language he used. He had scarcely crept into bed when I heard him give a roar of astonishment and pain. Then out he jumped upon the floor, and I saw that a large snapping-turtle had attached itself to his foot. Cousin Ned had to come in and cut off the creature's head with a knife before it would relinquish its hold.

How the horrid thing got in the bed I cannot conceive, but I do know that your father has made a memorandum to the effect that the clause leaving Reginald Launcelot five thousand dollars shall be stricken from his will.

Your father's rural pursuits have well-nigh ceased, and he now sits in a hammock, brought here by mistake for window curtains once upon a time. His latest exploit seems to have taken all the desire for this sort of thing out of his mind.

It appears that this morning—I did not witness this feat—he asked to be allowed to feed the hens, as a task both easy and



**“What in tarnation ye got there, ye durn fool?”**



amusing. He was given a three-quart measure and told where to go in the barn chamber for the corn. He told me that he had more fun than he has enjoyed since he left Chicago, scattering the golden grain and seeing the roosters "hog everything," as he expressed it.

But just as he had nearly done, along came Uncle Silas and noticed the last handful of corn your father was about to throw to the fowls. The old man gave a shrill whoop and seized your father's hand.

"What in tarnation ye got there, ye durn fool?" he cried angrily. (This part I *did* witness.)

"Corn, you dried-up old blockhead, you!" replied your father, growing rather vexed with his elder brother.

"Corn! Yes, I guess't is corn," shouted Uncle Silas. "But it's a seed corn of durndest, rarest sort, an' cost me jest five dollars a quart!"

"Well, here's ten dollars," said your father, looking sheepish.

"Ten dollars be jiggered!" returned



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Silas. "There ain't no more of that there corn in America."

But he took the ten dollars, I observed. Then he killed every fowl on the place, extracted the corn from their crops, and next day sold the birds for the market at a good price. So on the whole it was rather a red-letter day for your Uncle Silas.

In the hammock a little while ago was your father, sitting upright and with a faraway look in his eyes. He said nothing for a long while. Then I ventured to ask him why he was so preoccupied, and if he was not enjoying himself in the country. He rubbed his hand across his forehead and down over his face, as one will to bring the mind back into harness again.

"Oh, yes," he replied, but without that fervor that I have seen him exhibit in some things,—“yes, it's a rattling good time, and I feel that I am good for several years more life on account of it. But I was wondering”—and again came that glance in the direction of Chicago—“how short-ribs are holding up on the Board, and whether the cub”—meaning you—

"knows enough to let out that last big batch of lard before the price sags on him. I think, on the whole,—mind, I don't want to hurry you, my dear,—that we ought to be getting back into God's country again."

"Why, you are not hurrying *me*," I replied very quickly, for I was afraid he might change his mind and want to stay longer. "No, indeed, I have a great many things to do at home. And I think, don't you, that we are just a little bit out of our element here? They're dear, good people, but—well, *they* would n't be at ease in Michigan Avenue."

So it's all settled, and we start for Chicago to-morrow morning. I really believe it has done us good to come down here, for it has shown us both how kind life and the world have been to us since we left here many years ago. This, I believe, is the chief charm of going back to familiar soil,—the sense of gratitude at having escaped from it.

Yours lovingly,

MOTHER.

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P. S.—Your father is bringing that old darky Sam along, and is going to give him a job in the House. He says that the only man in Koshkonong who did n't "touch" him deserves recognition. Uncle Silas claims that this is just what Sam was working for ; so perhaps, after all, he made the most artistic "touch" of all.

M.

• THE FOURTEENTH LETTER

*In an Epistle Written at Fifty Miles an  
Hour, the Being Who Delights to Pose  
as an "Independent" Married Man is  
Pilloried in both Phrase and Fable.*



ON THE TRAIN, Sept. 20, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

When you recall that it has been nearly —yes, quite two months since I last wrote you, perhaps you may realize, at least to some extent, why I am subjecting myself to the discomforts of attempting penmanship in a railroad train. At a speed of fifty miles an hour, legible writing is not easy, even if one is at a beautifully appointed desk in the drawing-room of a private car.

When my correspondence with you necessarily came to an end, upon my return to Chicago from Koshkonong last summer, I missed it. I found that a fondness for that method of communicating with you had crept into my heart, and even the almost daily sight of your dear face did not seem to fill the void left by the cessation of the letters.

Perhaps this was because in my letters as I remember them, I permitted myself to probe a little more deeply into your life and its ambitions and influences, than I am ever able to do when I am with you. When you are before me I somehow become wholly the mother and never the critic. You appeal to me, when present, only as my "dear boy," exposed to all the trials and temptations of your fellows; absent, I can consider you with more or less calmness, although, of course, not with the judicial equanimity which characterizes the mental attitude of one who is near and dear to us both. I begin to suspect that there may be more of the school-teacher in me than I had thought was left after nearly forty years. If I seem, or if I have seemed pedantic, set it down to early habit, not to intention.

At whatever risk, I am glad that this trip in search of your father's health gives me renewed opportunity to write you. I will confess that in the past two months there have been many things that I would like to have said to you, but

did n't. Some of them I was silly enough to put on paper—don't be alarmed, I burned them all. I sometimes doubt whether the succession of bounteous banquets of advice, which, thanks to your dear father and myself, have been served to you, have done much, if any, good.

This is no reflection upon you, but merely a questioning whether too much advice, like a surplus of food, will not superinduce dyspepsia. However, you may have been able to pick and choose, declining what you do not need. To do this does not necessarily imply conceit. The reader of a patent medicine advertisement is not obliged to accredit to himself all the symptoms, although he may plead guilty to some.

To esteem oneself at a fair valuation is self-justice, not self-conceit. Yet it is not necessary to go to the extreme of a man of whom your father told me this morning. This man—Caleb Saunders of the Board of Trade—your father asserts to be the most self-sufficient man on earth.

"Caleb," says your father, "is a flour-



ishing mutual admiration society with its membership limited to one."

There are many such, I fancy. Your father exemplifies this particular specimen with a story which I suppose to be of his own manufacture; but it is good, which is more than—but that is not part of the story, which credits Mr. Saunders with having been persuaded to consult a fortune-teller at the big military fair in Chicago a few winters ago. It was just after he was married, and the seer informed him that his wife would be twice wedded and that her second husband would be one of the great men of the country.

"That was rather tough on Saunders," said a friend who heard of it, as your father tells it.

"Tough on Saunders? Why?" replied the authority for the tale. "Saunders thinks his wife must have been married before without his knowing it."

"Caleb Saunders," said your father after this story, "is one of those men who define bigot as some one who does n't think as he does and sticks to it."

In all fairness to Mr. Saunders, however, it may be well to add that he was on the train to which our car is attached, as far as Detroit. He came in to see us and your father was quite hospitable.

"Off on business?" inquired Mr. Saunders in the abrupt manner that he affects.

"No, not business this time," answered your father. "Pleasure."

"Oh," said Mr. Saunders. "With your wife?"

"Yes," admitted your father.

"Oh, well," retorted his visitor, "accidents will happen in the best-regulated families."

I fancied that your father was not as cordial after that. At all events, he told the fortune-teller story as soon as Mr. Saunders left. Reverting to the point, which somehow has forced itself upon me a good deal of late, whether it is wise to call too much attention to another's faults, I am reminded of a little experience which may repay you for trying to decipher this joggled writing.

Many years ago, when the prejudice

against the stage had scarcely ceased to relegate actors to the same category as thieves, an old minister in the next township to my native place had a son who was in the theatrical business. For a dozen years this fact had been a heavy cross to Dr. Spaulding, but he never mentioned the son, and only a few of the older members of the congregation knew the enormity of the boy's transgression.

But, one day, bill-posters invaded the village from a large town near by and covered the barns and fences with gaudy placards, many of which read: "Hear Caspar Spaulding's Funny Songs with the Mastodonic Minstrels," and, "Caspar Spaulding's Jokes with the Mastodonic Minstrels Make Mules Laugh."

As Dr. Spaulding's first name was also Caspar, it was only a few hours before the facts spread from mouth to mouth all over the village, and everybody knew that the pastor's son would perform at the Town Hall in Bolton on Monday and Tuesday evenings of the following week. Parson Spaulding made no comment, but

it was noted that he seemed unusually alert and keen.

Sunday morning came, and as it was a beautiful day the congregation was very large. When the sermon was reached, the pastor arose in the pulpit and for an hour and a quarter devoted himself to a scathing arraignment of the "player-folk," as he called them. Without referring directly to the company whose advertising matter could be readily seen from the church windows, he made it very clear that attendance at a performance would be an abomination, especially to himself. The sermon naturally made a sensation, and opinion was divided as to its good taste under the circumstances.

Tuesday afternoon there was a conference at the church. It had adjourned, and Dr. Spaulding and a number of the deacons and other members of the congregation were standing about the church door, together with a group of idlers, when a silk-hatted young man, in a fur coat, pushed his way through the crowd and held out his hand to Dr. Spaulding.

"How are you, father?" he said. The pastor hesitated a moment, and then, doubtless feeling that the Christian charity that he preached would scarcely permit another course, took the extended hand.

"Father," went on the young man briskly, "I want to thank you. You've practically saved my life."

Dr. Spaulding looked perplexed and opened his mouth for a question, but the comedian went on:

"For that sermon, you know," he explained. "The show was packed last night, sold out for to-night—engagement's been extended for the week. As I am half owner, and we were on our last legs, that sermon was a godsend."

Then he drew the old man aside, and added in a whisper that was distinctly audible across the street: "Say, dad, can't you work in a little something about the Mastodons at the prayer-meeting to-morrow night?"

So you see, my boy, a self-constituted advisory board can overdo it, sometimes. You will wonder, perhaps, what it was that

I wanted to say to you while I was in Chicago. The greater part of it, as I recall it, was just as well unsaid and unwritten. Yet there is one point that the "clack-clack" of the wheels drives into my memory. It is about Helen, and so, of course, about you.

I am fonder of Helen than ever before, and this is considerable for a mother-in-law to say, when for two months she has seen that she is a very bad second in the affections of her son. But Helen's happiness and contentment are yours, and hence anything that seems likely to impair them in her is my duty to prevent, if I can.

Will you forgive me if I divorce myself from my motherhood long enough to be for a few moments the stern critic? Then, permission having been accorded, let me say, as gently as possible, that I have noticed a growing tendency on your part to assert—no, on second thought "assume" is the word I should use—to assume an independence of your wife which you really do not feel. When this spirit once begins to take root in a man, it is

time to fear for the future. You may accept my word for it that upon this point I have had experience which qualifies me to judge.

You are not independent of your wife. Deep down in your heart, you don't want to be. But there is a peculiarly masculine fallacy that appears to be latent in most husbands, and that is encouraged by club and business life, that a man cannot remain manly unless he frequently makes it evident to his wife and to the world in general that he is not only master in, but superior to the influences and control of home.

In a small way this does n't amount to much. In itself it was of little consequence when you told Helen last week that you felt that you must attend Freddie Nichols's farewell stag supper. Of course you did not realize that she knew, through her cousin Frank, that it was to be what he called an "orgy." If you had, you would not have insisted, but she did n't choose to tell you.

The habit of disrespect of a wife's

wishes is more easily acquired than dismissed, and you may depend upon it that although a good wife may sometimes be wrong when she wishes her husband not to do a thing, she believes she 's acting solely for his good.

But this is too serious, is it not, for crabbed chirography? Then let me tell you about an "independent man" who lived next door to us, when we were on the west side, the first year we lived in Chicago. This Henry Jacobs was an extremely blustering, self-sufficient gentleman among his fellows of social life, said your father, who knew him in a business way. Late one summer night we were sitting at a front window in our bedroom—we could not fly to summer resorts in those days—when we heard a great commotion down the street, and soon after three men came into the light of the street lamp, and stopped in front of the next house.

"Thank you, gen'lemen," said a voice that I did not recognize, but your father said it was Jacobs. "Thank you, gen'le-



men," he went on, "for court'sy an' consid'ration."

"Don't mention it, Jacobs," said one of the others.

"Well, won't 'f you insist," returned Jacobs, "but, gen'lemen, you 'll come in an' have bite t' eat?"

"Oh, no," responded the third member of the party. "Could n't think of it at this hour."

"At this hour? What 's hour anyway?" asked Jacobs.

"Oh, no, Jacobs," spoke up the other. "We could n't think of disturbing your house."

"Disturbing my house? Nonsense!" cried Jacobs, in a voice calculated to alarm the neighborhood. "I'll have you und'stan' I 'm master in m' own house. I 'm independent, I am. I 'm th' emperor in my house, th' emperor,—und'stan'?"

Just then we heard a window raised and a feminine voice: "If his majesty will please come in and let the other two old fools go home, we 'll have peace."

As the two men assisted Jacobs up the

steps, he continued to protest that he was emperor in his own house. One of his friends was evidently abashed and, as the door opened, he raised his hat and said : " You will pardon us, madam, we——"

" Oh, that 's all right," interrupted the wife. " You two just toddle off. As for the czar here, I 'll attend to *him*. This 'll cost the royal treasury a trip to the Thousand Islands." Then the door slammed.

This little incident, of course, has no bearing upon my previous remarks. It is not an illustration but an antidote for what went before. But I *am* serious in what I have said about self-assertive independence in married life, on either side. A wedding should inaugurate a republic, not a monarchy. " Obey " need not be stricken from the marriage service to keep it out of the household. The ideal wedded life is that in which two do what they both think the other one would like to have them do. This may seem to be as involved as a baking-powder analysis ; but although the sentence may not parse well, it 's good sense.

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Your father has just come in from the smoker. "Writing that boy again, I presume?" he remarked. "You don't suppose he ever reads those letters, do you?"

"Well," I replied, "he reads *yours*." I could n't help it, really.

But he set me thinking. I wonder, do you really read mine—all of them—even as a serial?

My best love to dear Helen, and very best love to you.

MOTHER.

P. S.—Please tell Helen that I'd shirr it in the back and have fagoting down the front. On reflection, you'd better show her this postscript. If you tell it to her you'll twist it so that she'll think it's a pudding receipt.

M.

• THE FIFTEENTH LETTER

*A "Pleasure Trip" to New York That  
Results in no Enjoyment except Such  
as Accrues from Some Unique Busi-  
ness Transactions with "The Trust."*



NEW YORK, Sept. 28, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

You will be surprised at the heading of this letter, but despite my most earnest endeavors, your father insisted upon stopping over in this city, declaring that if he did n't "look in on the New York branch and shake things up a bit," as he expressed it, the business would "go to the dogs," though what the dogs want of it I cannot imagine. At all events, we have been here for two days, and we seem to be no nearer Saratoga than ever. I suggested to your father that if we did n't hurry on, the season would be closed and the Springs frozen up, but all the satisfaction I had was in the declaration that he "always liked water iced."

He has been at the office only once, however. The rest of his time has been spent in exceedingly mysterious confer-

ences. Until this afternoon I could not imagine why your father should receive so many callers, usually rather weighty appearing men, who are often closeted with him for hours at a time. But to-day the explanation came. It did not originate with your father, who has been curiously reticent about the matter when I recall how communicative he usually is concerning his business affairs; sometimes, indeed, embarrassingly so when company is present.

This afternoon he returned to the hotel in a rather angry frame of mind. He would not explain what had provoked him, but paced up and down the room, once exclaiming "Think I'm a dolt, do they, because I'm from Chicago!" A little later, when a bell-boy handed him a card, he said sternly: "Tell the gentleman I will receive him here, if he insists upon seeing me." When the boy had gone, he turned to me and said: "Remain here, please, if this man comes up. I'll talk no more with these people without a witness."

I would be more than human, not to say feminine, if my curiosity had not been of the keenest by this time. You will be curious, too. I can relieve *your* curiosity immediately by a brief word of explanation. These conferences that occasioned me so much speculation were due to the fact that, taking advantage of your father's presence in New York, a concerted effort has been made to induce him to pool the business of the House with the Trust. It appears that—but perhaps you will have a better idea of the situation if I give you some details of the interview at which I was present as “witness,” and of your father's subsequent comments.

The gentleman who sent the card was not long in reaching the room after the bell-boy left. When he came in and saw me he looked surprised, and then appeared to expect an introduction. This your father did not offer, for, as you know, when business is in his mind he is even less careful of the social amenities than usual.

“Well, sir,” he said, “what further is



there to say? As I told you, my decision is irrevocable."

I have forgotten the word he used. It was not that, but shorter and of the same general significance. The visitor, who had continued to glance at me repeatedly, now seemed to hesitate and then asked, in a voice that somehow reminded me of the cooing of a dove, "May—may I speak freely before—this lady?"

Your father turned his eyes in my direction. Then he said: "It's only my wife; she don't count."

The visitor coughed, and then began to speak, but your father interrupted. "Look here, Mr. Palmer," he said, "I've told you that when I could n't run my own business I'd give it up altogether."

"Yes, I know," said his guest gently. "But you remember the other day you——"

"I know I did," cried your father, as that set look we know so well came into his face. "But that was before your people showed their hand. When you could n't demonstrate to me in black and

white just what the figures were in the deal I——”

“You’ll pardon me,” broke in Mr. Palmer, “but we could n’t do that, now. That is obviously an unknown quantity and I——”

“Unknown quantity!” said your father, rising. “See here, Palmer, there’s no reason why you and I should be bad friends. Let me tell you a story that illustrates the unknown quantity that your people are so mysterious about. Indeed, I think the point of the story is the point of this whole transaction.”

“I shall be pleased to hear it,” said the urbane gentleman, although I could see that the turn the conversation had taken was giving him considerable annoyance.

“Well,” said your father, “it happened when I worked as a boy in a country grocery store.” (I never heard before that he was in a grocery store.) “A farmer in the neighborhood killed a steer, and as he had no way of disposing of or keeping any large quantity of the fresh

beef, he determined to salt it down. As he had no brine or receptacles for putting the meat in pickle, he arranged with the storekeeper, a down-east Yankee, to pickle it for him. The store man was to provide the barrels and brine, and sell one-quarter of the beef for his share."

"You 'll pardon me, won't you," interposed the listener, looking at his watch, "but I 've an important engagement very soon and if this story has no bearing——"

"Oh, but it has," answered your father. "And I 'll cut it short."

The big man settled back in his chair, a little wearily but as if he had made up his mind to submit. Meanwhile your father proceeded :

"One morning the farmer came into the store, 'Zekiel,' he said, 'guess I 'll take home a few pounds o' that 'ere meat.'

"'Think yer will, eh?' said Blythe, the grocer, whistling merrily as he smoothed out some paper-bags. 'Sit down a minute, Jonas, an' I 'll go down an' git some.'

"The farmer walked to the door, looked

out at his horses, and then sat down on a barrel and munched at a handful of dried apples.

“ ‘Crops good?’ said Blythe, through his whistling.

“ ‘So-so,’ said the farmer.

“ Question followed question, the grocer still busy about the store, and Jonas continually munching dried apples, but there was no movement by Blythe towards the cellar. After a while, however, he noticed the inroads that were being made by the farmer upon his stock of dried apples. Still whistling, he edged his way around the counter and to the back of the store, where he took from a nail an ash-sieve. With this in his hand he drew nearer and nearer to the farmer. When he was opposite him he pointed to the other end of the store.

“ ‘Rather a neat calendar, that new one, Jonas,’ he remarked, and as the farmer turned to look he clapped the sieve over the barrel of dried apples.”

“ But my dear sir,” at this point again interrupted your father’s visitor, “ I don’t

see what possible relation this can have to our business."

"You will. Listen," said your father. "After Blythe had covered up the apples, he returned to his post behind the counter, and began to dust off the shelves. The farmer exhausted his supply of dried apples and reached for more. His fingers encountered the sieve, and the contact seemed to remind him of his mission.

" 'Waal, Blythe,' he drawled. 'Reckon I 'll take that salt beef now.'

"Blythe raised his duster impressively. 'Jonas,' said he, 'the strangest thing has happened.'

" 'How 's that?' queried Zekiel.

" 'Waal, yer see,' explained the groceryman, 'I went down ter that beef barrel this morning an' felt round in the brine, an' what do yer suppose?'

" 'What?' asked Jonas interested.

" 'Do you believe it, but there 's not a bit o' that beef left,' continued the grocer.

" 'What!' cried the farmer.

" 'Fact. Not a bit of it,' Blythe went

on. 'I poked round in the brine, but not a bit.'

"'Where'd it go to?' demanded the perplexed Jonas.

"'That's jest what I said, Jonas,' returned Blythe. 'So I tips the bar'l over an' what d'yer s'pose? The rats had eaten the bar'l-head mos' off.'

"The farmer scratched his head and——"

Here your father's visitor, thoroughly nervous and provoked now, again broke in. "Why you insist on telling me this story, sir, is a mystery to——"

"You 've struck it!" cried your father. "That's just what Blythe told the farmer when he asked him why, if the barrel-head was eaten through, the brine did n't run out. 'That's the myst'ry, Jonas, that's the myst'ry,' he said, wagging his head sagely. And the mystery in this Trust scheme of yours is just like it."

A minute later, a red-faced, angry man flounced out of the room.

"There!" cried your father triumphantly, "I think that fellow 'll let me alone."

Then he regaled me for several hours with a recital of his experiences with the Trust emissaries.

"They tried to bait me into a 'blind pool,' as they called it," he said in beginning, "but I reckon they really wanted to make me what they evidently thought I was—a blind fool."

Then he told of the figures with which they tried to confuse him. They certainly did confuse *me*. When people's talk vacillates between millions and eighths of one per cent. I always find my thoughts muddled, despite the fact that I was once a school-teacher.

"They were not square," he declared, "and when I found it out I kicked over their dough dish. Then they threatened to wipe me out if I refused, and said that the business would have to go into the Trust. They declared it was fore-ordained."

Then, it seems, he told them a story. (In fact, I should judge that he does the bulk of his arguing in stories.) This particular anecdote is familiar to me, for I

have often heard your father tell it. Just what bearing it had upon his side of the case he did n't make me understand, but I tell it to you, for it may give a valuable hint as to your future course with regard to the business. While, as its founder, your father's ideas as to the House are entitled to all respect, I feel, nevertheless, that the young idea that has been well taught how to shoot sometimes hits the mark better than the instructor.

Your father says he was once on a Mississippi River steam-boat and overheard a missionary talking with the captain. The skipper tired of the conversation, which was upon things spiritual, and finally turned to his inquisitor with the query: "Do you believe things that are to be will be?"

"Oh, predestination?" asked the missionary.

"Yes, I s'pose that's it," agreed the captain.

"Yes, I do," admitted the reverend gentleman.

"D'ye see that steamer ahead?" The



missionary nodded. "Well, the *River Queen's* goin' to pass that boat if the boilers don't bust." The missionary rose in evident fright. "Oh, don't be scared. I did n't say they 'd bust. If it 's not ordained that they 'll bust, they won't."

"I—I think I 'll just go back there," said the missionary.

"Not afraid, be ye?" quizzed the captain. "You know you believe in predest—i—nation."

"Y—e—s," said the passenger, as well as his chattering teeth would permit, "but I don't care to be over the boilers when it occurs."

So I advise you to see if there is n't some safe place for the junior member of the firm, in case this Trust explosion should really be preordained. I wonder why your father, holding such opinions on this Trust question, should be so much in the company of the Trust representatives?

I ventured to ask him if it was n't like the Irish brewery workman that he tells about. This man came to work day after

day, wearing a blue ribbon. Finally his employer questioned him. "It seems strange," he said, "for a brewer to wear the badge of total abstinence."

"Well, ye see, sorr," replied the Irishman, "iv'ry mither's son as sees it wants to timplt me."

Your father naturally denies that there is any application to him in this story. Whether there is or not, the fact remains that I have been pretty lonesome here. We have n't been to a theatre. We did start for a concert, but made a mistake and wandered into a hall where a meeting for some charitable purpose was in progress.

We arrived late and were about to leave, when a young woman, who was taking up a collection, thrust a hat before your father, who absent-mindedly said, "No, no, I've nothing—nothing."

The young woman smiled and answered "Then take something, please. This collection is for the poor, you know."

You will be glad to hear that your father had the presence of mind to re-

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spond with a bill of liberal denomination. But he would n't go to the concert.

I am happy to report that he is better than in many months. Business is certainly his most nourishing food. My love to you both.

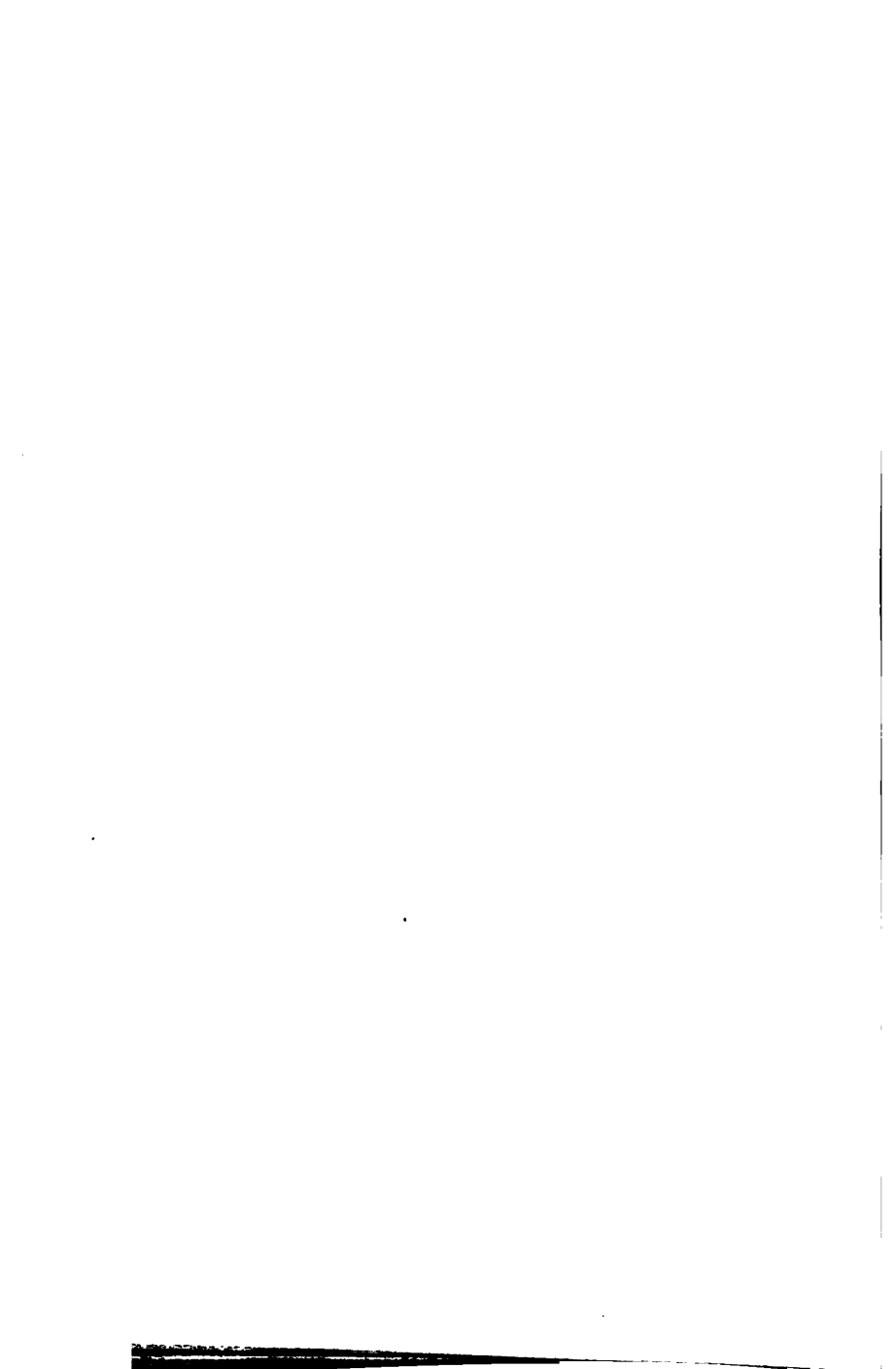
MOTHER.

P. S.—Your father came home very late to-night. "We can't go to Saratoga to-morrow," he said. "I want to look into this Trust idea a little more. There may be something in it after all." Perhaps he realizes that his predestination story may point two ways.

M.

• THE SIXTEENTH LETTER

*"The First Baby" Arrives, and the Newly  
Made "Grandma" Discourses Lov-  
ingly and Foolishly, yet Sapiently of  
Some of the Ills that Infant Flesh is  
Heir to.*



SARATOGA, October 4, 189-.

• MY DEAR SON :

Until you are my age and know what it is to have a new, young life come into yours to be loved and, perhaps—who knows?—to love me in return, you will never understand what your telegram meant to me. “A boy!” Thank the fates for that! I never brought up a girl, but I have been one, and had I been blessed with the large family that would have rejoiced me, I would have preferred all boys—but one.

Oh, yes, I would have had the one, had the choice been given me, just as a sort of leaven to keep the boys in order, for there is nothing that will make good boys quite so manly as a sister. Especially is this true where there is but one, for in that case the natural gallantry of the male

sex is encouraged by friendly rivalry. But, as I have said, I am heartily glad that your first is a boy. It is so much easier to spoil girls than boys, and after they are spoiled they are so much harder to set right. And I *know* I shall spoil your baby—if you are foolish enough to let me.

So I am a grandma! It seems impossible. Why, it was only a month ago—or was it last week?—that you crowed on my knee. And now you are a father! Dearie me, how time does get on!

My little idol may not have been born with a gold spoon in his mouth, but he'll get a round dozen of 'em by the first express after I know what name to put on them. What is it to be? Your wife may want to call him after her dear husband, but don't let her do it. I admit the honor, and all that she would signify by it, but is it fair to an infant who cannot make his own choice to compel him to play second fiddle, with an everlasting "junior" tagged upon him? Then again, reflect. Will it be pleasant for you, especially if, as

may happen, you sometimes feel a little jealous of Master Baby, never to know whether your wife is calling to you, or merely talking to "the light of muzzer's eyes"?

Why not call him after his grandfather? John is a good name. There never was a sturdier one, and if the newborn king of your home lives up to it, you will never have occasion to shed a tear for him. I may hint, in this connection, that your father again talks of changing his will. Before this is done I suggest that you act upon my hint, name the baby, and wire the news to his grandfather. He is, as you know, much interested in certain worthy trade-schools and kindred institutions, and although he has money enough to do everything he wishes, nevertheless, a happy and prompt decision on your part may keep a considerable extra sum in the family instead of turning it over to trustees, who *may* make the use of it that the testator intended.

Make the most of your first baby and be as big a fool over him as you can.



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You will never find more blissfully foolish happiness on this earth. No other baby will be quite the same as the first one. While you two dear children may not be quite as bad as the comic paper your father brought home the other night makes out parents to be, you will find the joy in your first-born tempered when a brother or sister arrives to keep him company.

"Hubby, dear," said a young wife (or so asserts the comic paper I referred to), "did you hear our poor little innocent darling crying his precious eyes out last night?"

"Indeed I did," answered the father, with a groan. "Was n't it musical? But my heart bled for him just the same."

Then: "Is it possible, husband, you don't hear that child [second baby] crying?" The husband: "Yes, I do, confounded little demon!"

Now that I am such a safe distance away, I can safely give you and your wife a few bits of advice on how to bring up the precious little one. When I am on

the scene, whatever reputation I may possess in the direction of such advice will vanish, for I have no doubt that I will make a bigger fool of myself over him than both his parents combined. But in my present security, I may give the general injunction not to fuss too much over his lordship.

If he does n't cut teeth and make a "katowse" over it, he will not be a real baby. If he does n't have colic pains, be sure there is something uncanny about his digestive powers. If pins don't stick into his flesh instead of where they belong, it will be because his skin is unnatural. So accept all these little disturbances, as well as the croup, the measles, the chicken-pox and their ilk, with a resignation that will be tantamount to satisfaction. When he falls down and bumps his dear forehead, kiss the place until it is well again, but don't 'phone the doctor and insist that the skull is fractured or that brain fever is inevitable.

I wish this advice would "take," but, of course, it will not, although you might

as well have it as a sort of febrifuge against the day when baby stares too hard at his own thumb, and appears to have suddenly developed a double cross in his vision. Above all, don't let anybody, no matter who,—not even if it's the whole college of physicians and surgeons,—keep dosing that baby. Medicine may be all right for grown folks, who have some free will in the matter, but to be all the time forcing nauseous drugs down a baby's throat is pretty nearly criminal.

I recall an incident of your infancy that is too good to keep from you, even though in telling it I forfeit all claim to your respect as the sort of mother you wish Helen to be. When you read it, pray bear in mind that I have changed since then, and am better fitted from my mistakes to give advice to others. When you were about eight months old you had a very severe illness. I've forgotten what the special trouble was, you had so many of them,—early and often, your father used to say. In this case your fever was high, and medicine was necessary. One

afternoon, at the crisis of the disorder, the doctor left a bottle of a soothing remedy, with instructions to give you a teaspoonful once an hour. The next morning he called early, and asked the nurse if the medicine had been given regularly.

"Yes, sir, every hour," said the nurse.

Just then the doctor saw the bottle. "Good gracious, it's nearly empty!" he exclaimed. "It can't be possible you gave him all that?"

At this point I appeared upon the scene and took the answer out of the nurse's mouth. "Well, you see, doctor," I explained, "father and nurse and I each had to take some so baby would take it."

The good old doctor looked at me and commenced to smile, then he laughed, and ended with a roar of merriment. Provoked beyond measure, I ran to your cradle, alarmed at the possible effect of the excitement upon you, for we had been careful that no unusual sound should reach you. As I approached you opened your eyes, reached out your arms, not to

me but to the doctor, and crowed with a delight that sounded like the echo of his laugh.

It was a serious matter then, but I have since thought that the unrestrained burst of nature and good humor marked the turning-point in your illness. I mentioned this to your father once, long after, and he laughed and said, in that grim way of his : " You can bet Doc. put that laugh in his bill."

I almost, if not quite, wish you were poor, and that your wife had to look after her own child—alone and all herself. Of course, that is not possible, but I do hope that she will not intrust him too much to the care of another. Although all nurses may not be like the one who, when she was asked if she liked children, replied, " It depends upon the wages," yet no nurse can be what the child's mother *may* be.

This is not to say that some nurses are not worth their weight in gold compared to some mothers, but Helen, of course, is not such a mother. When you remember that it is said that no person comes in

contact with another person without being to some infinitesimal degree influenced thereby, how important must it be that the associations of children — yes, even of babies—should be all they ought to be. If mothers are ever needed it is when the child is at the youngest and most impressionable age.

I don't want to frighten you or your Helen, but I know of a case where a careless nurse made a baby blind for life by using rancid goose-grease on its eyes. In another instance, a little boy, suffering from stomach trouble, was allowed by a careless attendant to eat a whole plate of dressed lettuce that was on her dinner-tray sent up to the room. A physician was summoned in haste by the distracted mother, when she learned what had happened. There was only the slightest hope to save her child, she told herself. As a matter of fact, as the physician agreed, the vinegar and the green leaves undoubtedly saved the child's life, by neutralizing some unwholesome element in the stomach; the fact that the little one craved

that particular food, proving its need. This, however, was the good luck, not the good sense of the nurse.

Yet there is no need to worry either yourself or a child into a decline by overshadowing fear of what may happen to him. I note, in one of your letters to your father, that you tell of a young woman who wept, because, as she sat in front of the range one day, she thought of what a terrible calamity it would be if after she was married and her baby was big enough to toddle, it should crawl into the oven and be roasted. A young woman I once heard of was quite the equal of your probably imagined girl. She confessed one morning that she had not slept half the night, because she was worrying.

"What about?" asked her mother.

"I'm afraid the man who marries me will care more for my money than for me," she replied.

"Why, you are not even engaged, Mary," said her mother, in surprise.

"Well, I may be some time," her daughter answered.

"But there 's one thing that makes it safe," returned her mother, with a laugh. "You 've not got a dollar to your name."

"But, mother, Uncle Joe might die and leave me *his* money," cried the girl, who insisted on being miserable.

Cross the bridge into the Land of Despair if you want to, you and Helen, but don't take my baby with you. There, I 've appropriated him already! I was afraid I could n't acknowledge the receipt of your telegram without betraying myself, and now I 've done it. I paused for a moment to consider whether I had n't better scratch out that unlucky slip of the pen.

"But no," I said, aloud. "Let them know me as I am, a foolish old grandmother, for if you are not too sensible and too firm to allow it, I am destined to present the most graphic picture of doting folly ever on exhibition. As you have a large house, you may be able to locate the nursery so that it can be safeguarded from me, although I don't exactly see how. If you had to live in a flat, how



much easier it would be for me to love baby at every inopportune moment !”

But I ’m glad you don’t live in a flat. Your father and I occupied one for a few months when we first came to Chicago. It was then your father resumed the smoking habit. The man in the suite below affected a pipe, and we smoked it with him—the next day ; so your father took up cigars as an antidote.

The day we moved, the agent of the property came to see us to find out the trouble.

“ Why,” said your father, “ we don’t dare stay any longer for fear the house ’ll tumble down.”

“ What do you mean ? ” asked the agent.

Your father pointed to a place in the ceiling, from which a square yard of plaster had fallen. “ The building is so flimsy it won’t hold together much longer,” he said.

The agent examined the ceiling intently, without appearing to notice what your father was saying. “ I wonder what caused that plaster to fall ? ” he said at last.

"The woman upstairs has a bad cough," suggested your father, as a jest.

The agent appeared to grow very angry. "I 'll go up and see the Jenkinses this minute," he broke out. "The way some people act, you 'd imagine they thought they were living in a castle on a cliff," and he bounced out.

I remember that you asked me to tell you how I liked Saratoga. The baby has driven it out of my head till now. Frankly, I don't like it at all. I may be old-fashioned, but I do like women with husbands to stick to them. Here no woman ever introduces you to her husband, but always to some other man. Possibly the husbands could n't afford to have their wives here if they did n't stay in the city and attend to business. One notable thing has happened since I've been here. I've met the Payne-Smythes. We've lived next door to them in Chicago for twelve years, as you know, but we had to come way out here to get acquainted.

The comparatively few people here now

are mostly New Yorkers, as is natural. You will want to know how I like them. Well—but perhaps I can tell you best in a little story. Two talkative women went to call on a newcomer in the neighborhood, and were waiting in the parlor, when a little girl came in to get something. One of the women could n't refrain from comment, and, to conceal the sense from the child, spelled it, "Not p-r-e-t-t-y?" she said.

The child tossed her head, and, as quick as a flash, replied: "Not p-r-e-t-t-y, but pretty s-m-a-r-t," and left. Perhaps from this you can deduce what I think of New Yorkers.

I know now why they call this a "watering-place." Your father is coming from his fifth trip to the springs to-day. If water will cure him, he'll never give Dr. Maynard another check.

But he has cautioned me against "meddling with that baby," and I must seal this letter before he asks to see it.

With love to Helen and the baby,

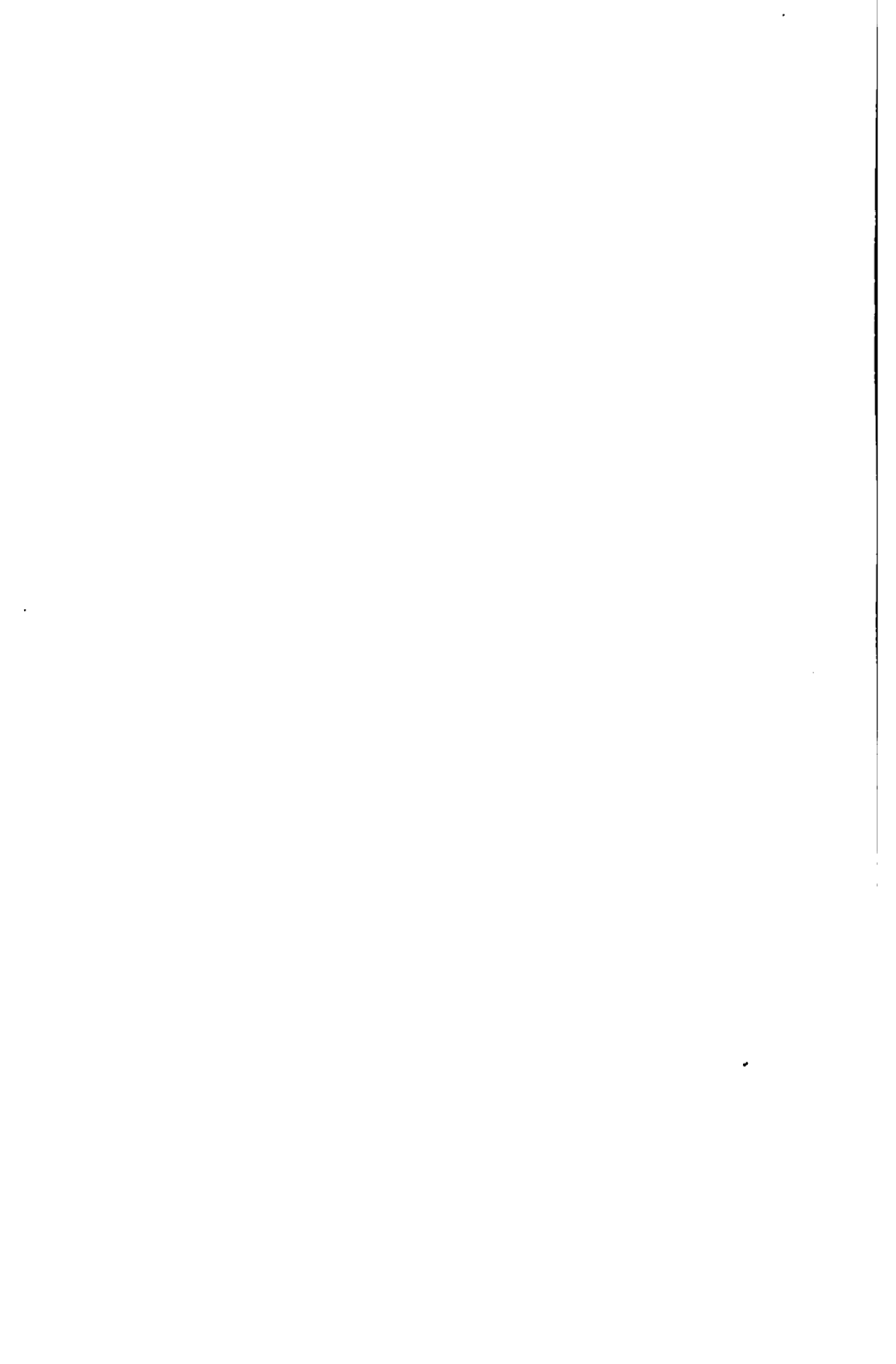
MOTHER.

P. S.—How much did that precious boy weigh? You were just eleven pounds. Kiss him once for me. On second thought, you had better let Helen do it. You might scare him.

M.

PP. S.—We have just decided that we leave for home to-morrow. We *must* see that baby.

M.



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